WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

A CRITICAL STUDY

BY

GEORGE BRANDES

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

BOOK SECOND—(*Continued*)

XI

HAMLET: ITS ANTECEDENTS IN FICTION, HISTORY, AND DRAMA

MANY and various emotions crowded upon Shakespeare's mind in the year 1601. In its early months Essex and Southampton were condemned. At exactly the same time there occurs the crisis in the relations of Pembroke and Shakespeare with the Dark Lady. Finally, in the early autumn, Shakespeare suffered a loss which he must have felt deeply. The Stratford register of burials for 1601 contains this line—

Septemb. 8. *Mr. Johannes Shakespeare.*

He lost his father, his earliest friend and guardian, whose honour and reputation lay so near to his heart. The father probably lived with his son's family in the handsome New Place, which Shakespeare had bought four years before. He had doubtless brought up the two girls Susannah and Judith; he had doubtless sat by the death-bed of the little Hamnet. Now he was no more. All the years of his youth, spent at his father's side, revived in Shakespeare's mind, memories flocked in upon him, the fundamental relation between son and father preoccupied his thoughts, and he fell to brooding over filial love and filial reverence.

In the same year *Hamlet* began to take shape in Shakespeare's imagination.

Hamlet has given the name of Denmark a world-wide renown. Of all Danish men, there is only one who can be called famous on the largest scale; only one with whom the thoughts of men are for ever busied in Europe, America, Australia, aye, even in Asia and Africa, wherever European culture has made its way; and this one never existed, at any rate in the form in which he has become known to the world. Denmark has produced several men of note—Tycho Brahe, Thorvaldsen, and Hans Christian Andersen—but none of them has attained a hundredth part of Hamlet's fame. The *Hamlet* literature is comparable in extent to the literature of one of the smaller European peoples—the Slovaks, for instance.

As it is interesting to follow with the eye the process by which a block of marble slowly assumes human form, so it is interesting to observe how the *Hamlet* theme gradually acquires its Shakespearian character.

The legend first appears in Saxo Grammaticus. Fengo murders his brave brother Horvendil, and marries his widow Gerutha (Gertrude). Horvendil's son, Amleth, determines to disarm Fengo's malevolence by feigning madness. In order to test whether he is really mad, a beautiful girl is thrown in his way, who is to note whether, in his passion for her, he still maintains the appearance of madness. But a foster-brother and friend of Amleth's reveals the plot to him; the girl, too, has an old affection for him; and nothing is discovered. Here lie the germs of Ophelia and Horatio.

With regard to Amleth's mad talk, it is explained that, having a conscientious objection to lying, he so contorted his sayings that, though he always said what he meant, people could not discover whether he meant what he said, or himself understood it—an account of the matter which applies quite as well to the dark sayings of the Shakespearian Hamlet as to the naïve riddling of the Jutish Amleth.

Polonius, too, is here already indicated—especially the scene in which he plays eavesdropper to Hamlet's conversation with his mother. One of the King's friends (*præsumtione quam solertia abundantior*) proposes that some one shall conceal himself in the Queen's chamber. Amleth runs his sword through him and

throws the dismembered body to the pigs, as Hamlet in the play drags the body out with him. Then ensues Amleth's speech of reproach to his mother, of which not a little is retained even in Shakespeare:—

"Think'st thou, woman, that these hypocritical tears can cleanse thee of shame, thee, who like a wanton hast cast thyself into the arms of the vilest of nithings, hast incestuously embraced thy husband's murderer, and basely flatterest and fawnest upon the man who has made thy son fatherless! What manner of creature doest thou resemble? Not a woman, but a dumb beast who couples at random."

Fengo resolves to send Amleth to meet his death in England, and despatches him thither with two attendants, to whom Shakespeare, as we know, has given the names of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern—the names of two Danish noblemen whose signatures have been found in close juxtaposition (with the date 1577) in an album which probably belonged to a Duke of Würtemberg. They were colleagues in the Council of Regency during the minority of Christian IV. These attendants (according to Saxo) had rune-staves with them, on which Amleth altered the runes, as in the play he re-writes the letters.

One more little touch is, as it were, led up to in Saxo: the exchange of the swords. Amleth, on his return, finds the King's men assembled at his own funeral feast. He goes around with a drawn sword, and on trying its edge against his nails he once or twice cuts himself with it. Therefore they nail his sword fast into its sheath. When Amleth has set fire to the hall and rushes into Fengo's chamber to murder him, he takes the King's sword from its hook and replaces it with his own, which the King in vain attempts to draw before he dies.

Now that Hamlet, more than any other Dane, has made the name of his fatherland world-famous, it impresses us strangely to read this utterance of Saxo's: "Imperishable shall be the memory of the steadfast youth who armed himself against falsehood with folly, and with it marvellously cloaked the splendour of heaven-radiant wisdom. . . . He left history in doubt as to whether his heroism or his wisdom was the greater."

The Hamlet of the tragedy, with reference to his mother's too hasty marriage, says, "Frailty, thy name is woman!" Saxo remarked with reference to Amleth's widow, who was in too great

a hurry to marry again: "Thus it is with all the promises of women: they are scattered like chaff before the wind and pass away like waves of the sea. Who then will trust to a woman's heart, which changes as flowers shed their leaves, as seasons change, and as new events wipe out the traces of those that went before?"

In Saxo's eyes, Amleth represented not only wisdom, but bodily strength. While the Hamlet of Shakespeare expressly emphasises the fact that he is anything but Herculean ("My father's brother, but no more like my father than I to Hercules"), Saxo expressly compares his hero to the Club-Bearer whose name is a synonym for strength: "And the fame of men shall tell of him that, if it had been given him to live his life fortunately to the end, his excellent dispositions would have displayed themselves in deeds greater than those of Hercules, and would have adorned his brows with the demigod's wreath." It sounds almost as though Shakespeare's Hamlet entered a protest against these words of Saxo.

In the year 1559 the legend was reproduced in French in Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques*, and seems in this form to have reached England, where it furnished material for the older *Hamlet* drama, now lost, but to which we find frequent allusions. It cannot be proved that this play was founded upon Pavier's English translation of Belleforest, or even that Shakespeare had Pavier before him; for the oldest edition of the translation which has come down to us (reprinted in Collier's *Shakespeare's Library*, ed. 1875, pt. I. vol. ii. p. 224) dates from 1608, and contains certain details (such as the eavesdropper's concealment behind the arras, and Hamlet's exclamation of "A rat! a rat!" before he kills Polonius) of which there is no trace in Belleforest, and which may quite as well have been taken from Shakespeare's tragedy, as borrowed by him from an unknown older edition of the novel.

The earliest known allusion to the old *Hamlet* drama is the phrase of Thomas Nash, dating from 1589, quoted above (vol. i. p. 109). In 1594 the Lord Chamberlain's men (Shakespeare's company), acting together with the Lord Admiral's men at the Newington Butts theatre under the management of Henslow and others, performed a *Hamlet* with reference to which Henslow notes in his account-book for June 9th: "Rd. at hamlet . . . viii s." This play must have been the old one, for Henslow would

otherwise have added the letters *ne* (new), and the receipts would have been much greater. His share, as we see, was only eight shillings, whereas it was sometimes as much as nine pounds.

The chief interest of this older play seems to have centred in a figure added by the dramatist—the Ghost of the murdered King, which cried "Hamlet, revenge!" This cry is frequently quoted. It first appears in 1596 in Thomas Lodge's *Wits Miserie*, where it is said of the author that he "looks as pale as the visard of ye ghost, which cried so miserably at ye theator like an oister-wife, *Hamlet, revenge.*" It next occurs in Dekker's *Satiromastix*, 1602, where Tucca says, "My name's *Hamlet, revenge!*" In 1605 we find it in Thomas Smith's *Voiage and Entertainement in Rushia;* and it is last found in 1620 in Samuel Rowland's *Night Raven*, where, however, it seems to be an inaccurate quotation from the *Hamlet* we know.

Shakespeare's play was entered in the Stationers' Register on the 26th of July 1602, under the title "A booke called '*the Revenge of Hamlett Prince* [*of*] *Denmarke' as yt was latelie Acted by the Lord Chamberleyne his servantes.*"

That it made an instant success on the stage is almost proved by the fact that so early as the 7th of July the opposition manager Henslow pays Chettle twenty shillings for "The Danish Tragedy," evidently a furbishing up of the old play.

The publication of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, however, did not take place till 1603. Then appeared the First Quarto, indubitably a pirated edition, either founded entirely on shorthand notes, or on shorthand notes eked out by aid of the actors' parts, and completed, in certain passages, from memory. Although this edition certainly contains a debased and corrupt text, it is impossible to attribute to the misunderstandings or oversights of a copyist or stenographer all its divergences from the carefully-printed quarto of the following year, which is practically identical with the First Folio text. The differences are so great as to exclude such a theory. We have evidently before us Shakespeare's first sketch of the play, although in a very defective form; and, as far as we can see, this first sketch keeps considerably closer than the definitive text to the old *Hamlet* drama, on which Shakespeare based his play. Here and there, though with considerable uncertainty, we can even trace scenes from the old play among Shakespeare's, and touches of its style mingling with his. It is

very significant, also, that there are more rhymes in the First than in the Second Quarto.

The most remarkable feature in the 1603 edition is a scene between Horatio and the Queen in which he tells her of the King's frustrated scheme for having Hamlet murdered in England. The object of this scene is to absolve the Queen from complicity in the King's crime; a purpose which can also be traced in other passages of this first edition, and which seems to be a survival from the older drama. So far as we can gather, Horatio appears to have played an altogether more prominent part in the old play; Hamlet's madness appears to have been wilder; and Polonius probably bore the name of Corambis, which is prefixed to his speeches in the edition of 1603. Finally, as we have seen, Shakespeare took the important character of the Ghost, not indicated in either the legend or the novel, from this earlier *Hamlet* tragedy. The theory that it is the original of the German tragedy, *Der bestrafte Brudermord*, published by Cohn, from a manuscript of 1710, is unsupported by evidence.

Looking backward through the dramatic literature of England, we find that the author of the old *Hamlet* drama in all probability sought inspiration in his turn in Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*. It appears from allusions in Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* and *Bartholomew Fair* that this play must have been written about 1584. It was one of the most popular plays of its day with the theatre-going public. So late as 1632, Prynne in his *Histriomastix* speaks of a woman who, on her death-bed, instead of seeking the consolations of religion, cried out: "Hieronimo, Hieronimo! O let me see Hieronimo acted!"

The tragedy opens, after the fashion of its models in Seneca, with the apparition of the murdered man's ghost, and his demand for vengeance. Thus the Ghost in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is lineally descended from the spirit of Tantalus in Seneca's *Thyestes*, and from the spirit of Thyestes in Seneca's *Agamemnon*. Hieronimo, who has been driven mad by sorrow for the loss of his son, speaking to the villain of the piece, gives half-ironical, half-crazy expression to the anguish that is torturing him:—

> "*Lorenzo.* Why so, Hieronimo? use me.
> *Hieronimo.* Who? you my lord?
> I reserve your favour for a greater honour:
> This is a very toy, my lord, a toy.

Lor. All's one, Hieronimo, acquaint me with it.
Hier. I' faith, my lord, 'tis an idle thing . . .
The murder of a son, or so—
A thing of nothing, my lord!"

These phrases foreshadow Hamlet's speeches to the King. But Hieronimo is really mad, although he speaks of his madness much as Hamlet does, or rather denies it point-blank—

"Villain, thou liest, and thou dost naught
But tell me I am mad: thou liest, I am not mad.
I know thee to be Pedro, and he Jaques;
I'll prove it to thee; and were I mad, how could I?"

Here and there, especially in Ben Jonson's additions, we come across speeches which lie very close to passages in Hamlet. A painter, who also has lost his son, says to Hieronimo: "Ay, sir, no man did hold a son so dear;" whereupon he answers—

"What, not as thine? That is a lie,
As massy as the earth: I had a son,
Whose least unvalued hair did weigh
A thousand of thy sons; and he was murdered."

Thus Hamlet cries to Laertes:—

"I lov'd Ophelia: forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum."

Hieronimo, like Hamlet, again and again postpones his vengeance:—

"All times fit not for revenge.
Thus, therefore, will I rest me in unrest,
Dissembling quiet in unquietness:
Not seeming that I know their villainies,
That my simplicity may make them think
That ignorantly I will let all slip."

At last he determines to have a play acted, as a means to his revenge. The play is Kyd's own *Solyman and Perseda*, and in the course of it the guilty personages, who play the chief parts, are slaughtered, not in make-believe, but in reality.

Crude and naïve though everything still is in *The Spanish Tragedy*, which resembles *Titus Andronicus* in style rather than

any other of Shakespeare's works, it evidently, through the medium of the earlier *Hamlet* play, contributed a good deal to the foundations of Shakespeare's *Hamlet.*

Before going more deeply into the contents of this great work, and especially before trying to bring it into relation to Shakespeare's personality, we have yet to see what suggestions or impulses the poet may have found in contemporary history.

We have already remarked upon the impression which the Essex family tragedy must have made upon Shakespeare in his early youth, before he had even left Stratford. All England was talking of the scandal: how the Earl of Leicester, who was commonly suspected of having had Lord Essex poisoned, immediately after his death had married his widow, Lady Lettice, whose lover no one doubted that he had been during her husband's lifetime. There is much in the character of King Claudius to suggest that Shakespeare has here taken Leicester as his model. The two have in common ambition, sensuality, an ingratiating conciliatory manner, astute dissimulation, and complete unscrupulousness. On the other hand, it is quite unreasonable to suppose, with Hermann Conrad,[1] that Shakespeare had Essex in his eye in drawing Hamlet himself.

Almost as near to Shakespeare's own day as the Essex-Leicester catastrophe had been the similar events in the Royal Family of Scotland. Mary Stuart's second husband, Lord Darnley, who bore the title of King of Scotland, had been murdered in 1567 by her lover, the daring and unscrupulous Bothwell, whom the Queen almost immediately afterwards married. Her contemporaries had no doubt whatever of Mary's complicity in the assassination, and her son James saw in his mother and his stepfather his father's murderers. The leaders of the Scottish rebellion displayed before the captive Queen a banner bearing a representation of Darnley's corpse, with her son kneeling beside it and calling to Heaven for vengeance. Darnley, like the murdered King in *Hamlet*, was an unusually handsome, Bothwell an unusually repulsive, man.

James was brought up by his mother's enemies, and during her lifetime, and after her death, was perpetually wavering between her adherents, who had defended her legal rights, and her adversaries, who had driven her from the country and placed

[1] *Preuss. Jahrbücher*, February 1895.

James himself upon the throne. He made one or two efforts, indeed, to soften Elizabeth's feelings towards his mother, but refrained from all attempt to avenge her death. His character was irresolute. He was learned and—what Hamlet is very far from being—a superstitious pedant; but, like Hamlet, he was a lover of the arts and sciences, and was especially interested in the art of acting. Between 1599 and 1601 he entertained in Scotland a portion of the company to which Shakespeare belonged; but it is uncertain whether Shakespeare himself ever visited Scotland. There is little doubt, on the other hand, that when, after Elizabeth's death in 1603, James made his entrance into London, Shakespeare, richly habited in a uniform of red cloth, walked in his train along with Burbage and a few others of the leading players. Their company was henceforth known as "His Majesty's Servants."

Although there is in all this no lack of parallels to Hamlet's circumstances, it is, of course, as ridiculous to take James as to take Essex for the actual model of Hamlet. Nothing could at that time have been stupider or more tactless than to remind the heir-presumptive to the throne, or the new King, of the deplorable circumstances of his early history. This does not exclude the supposition, however, that contemporary history supplied Shakespeare with certain outward elements, which, in the moment of conception, contributed to the picture bodied forth by the creative energy of his genius.

From this point of view, too, we must regard the piles of material which well-meaning students bring to light, in the artless belief that they have discovered the very stones of which Shakespeare constructed his dramatic edifice. People do not distinguish between the possibility that the poet may have unconsciously received a suggestion here and there for details of his work, and the theory that he deliberately intended an imaginative reproduction of definite historic events. No work of imagination assuredly, and least of all such a work as *Hamlet*, comes into existence in the way these theorists assume. It springs from within, has its origin in an overmastering sensation in the poet's soul, and then, in the process of growth, assimilates certain impressions from without.

XII.

"HAMLET"—MONTAIGNE AND GIORDANO BRUNO—TRAITS OF DANISH MANNERS

ALONG with motives from novel, drama, and history, impressions of a philosophical and quasi-scientific order went to the making of *Hamlet.* Of all Shakespeare's plays, this is the profoundest and most contemplative; a philosophic atmosphere breathes around it. Naturally enough, then, criticism has set about inquiring to what influences we may ascribe these broodings over life and death and the mysteries of existence.

Several students, such as Tschischwitz and König, have tried to make out that Giordano Bruno exercised a preponderating influence upon Shakespeare.[1] Passages suggesting a cycle in nature, such as Hamlet's satirical outburst to the King about the dead Polonius (iv. 3), have directed their thoughts to the Italian philosopher. In some cases they have found or imagined a definite identity between sayings of Hamlet's and of Bruno's—for instance, on determinism. Bruno has a passage in which he emphasises the necessity by which everything is brought about: "Whatever may be my preordained eventide, when the change shall take place, I await the day, I, who dwell in the night; but they await the night who dwell in the daylight. All that is, is either here or there, near or far off, now or after, soon or late." In the same spirit Hamlet says (v. 2): "There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all." Bruno says: "Nothing is absolutely imperfect or evil; it only seems so in relation to something else, and what is bad for one is good for another." In *Hamlet* (ii. 2), "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so."

[1] Tschischwitz: *Shakespeare-Forschungen;* König: *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch*, xi.

When once attention had been directed to Giordano Bruno, not only his philosophical and more popular writings, but even his plays were ransacked in search of passages that might have influenced Shakespeare. Certain parallels and points of resemblance were indeed discovered, very slight and trivial in themselves, but which theorists would not believe to be fortuitous, since it was known that Giordano Bruno had passed some time in England in Shakespeare's day, and had frequented the society of the most distinguished men. As soon as the matter was closely investigated, however, the probability of any direct influence vanished almost to nothing.

Giordano Bruno remained on English ground from 1583 to 1585. Coming from France, where he had instructed Henri III. in the Lullian art, a mechanical, mnemotechnic method for the solution of all possible scientific problems, he brought with him a letter of recommendation to Mauvissière, the French Ambassador, in whose house he was received as a friend of the family during the whole of his stay in London. He made the acquaintance of many leading men of the time, such as Walsingham, Leicester, Burghley, Sir Philip Sidney and his literary circle, but soon went on to Oxford in order to lecture there and disseminate the doctrines which lay nearest his heart. These were the Copernican system in opposition to the Ptolemaic, which still held the field at Oxford, and the theory that the same principle of life is diffused through everything—atoms and organisms, plants, animals, human beings, and the universe at large. He quarrelled with the Oxford scholars, and held them up to ridicule and contempt in his dialogue *La Cena de le Ceneri*, published soon after, in which he speaks in the most disparaging terms of the coarseness of English manners. The dirtiness of the London streets, for example, and the habit of letting one goblet go round the table, from which every one drank, aroused his dislike and scorn scarcely less than the rejection of Copernicus by the pedants of the University.

At the very earliest, Shakespeare cannot have come to London until the year of Bruno's departure from England, and can therefore scarcely have met him. The philosopher exercised no influence upon the spiritual life of the day in England. Not even Sir Philip Sidney was attracted by his doctrine, and his name does not once occur in Greville's Life of Sidney, although Greville had seen much of Bruno. Brunnhofer, who has studied

the question, points out, as showing how little trace Bruno left behind him in England, that there is not in the Bodleian a single contemporary manuscript or document of any kind which throws the least light upon Bruno's stay in London or Oxford.[1] It has been maintained, nevertheless, that Shakespeare must have read his philosophic writings in Italian. It is, of course, possible; but there is nothing in *Hamlet* to prove it—nothing that cannot be fully accounted for without assuming that he had the slightest acquaintance with them.

The only expression in Shakespeare which, probably by accident, has an entirely pantheistic ring is "The prophetic soul of the wide world" in Sonnet cvii.; the only passages containing an idea, not certainly identical, but comparable with Bruno's doctrine of the metamorphosis of natural forms are the cyclical Sonnets lix., cvi., cxxiii. If Giordano Bruno really had anything to do with these passages, it must be because Shakespeare had heard some talk about the great Italian's doctrine, which may just at that time have been recalled to the recollection of his English acquaintances by his death at the stake in Rome, on February 17, 1600. If Shakespeare had studied his writings, he would, among other things, have obtained some glimmering of the Copernican system, of which he knows nothing. On the other hand, it is quite conceivable that he may have picked up in conversation an approximate and incomplete conception of Bruno's philosophy, and that this conception may have given birth to the above-mentioned philosophical reveries. All the passages in *Hamlet* which have been attributed to the influence of Bruno really stand in much closer relation to writers under whose literary and philosophical influence we know beyond a doubt that Shakespeare fell.

There is preserved in the British Museum a copy of Florio's translation of Montaigne's Essays, folio, London, 1603, with Shakespeare's name written on the fly-leaf. The signature is, I believe, a forgery; but that Shakespeare had read Montaigne is clear beyond all doubt.

There are many evidences of the influence exerted by Montaigne's Essays on English readers of that date. It was only natural that the book should vividly impress the greatest men of the age; for there were not at that time many such books as Montaigne's—none, perhaps, containing so living a revelation,

[1] Brunnhofer: *Giordano Bruno's Weltanschanung und Verhängniss.*

not merely of an author, but of a human being, natural, many-sided, full of ability, rich in contradictions.

Outside of *Hamlet*, we trace Montaigne quite clearly in one passage in Shakespeare, who must have had the Essays lying on his table while he was writing *The Tempest*. Gonzalo says (ii. 1)—

> "I' the commonwealth I would by contraries
> Execute all things, for no kind of traffic
> Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
> Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
> And use of service, none; contract, succession,
> Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
> No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil:
> No occupation, all men idle, all;
> And women too."

We find this speech almost word for word in Montaigne (Book i. chap. 30): "It is a nation that hath no kind of traffike, no knowledge of letters, no intelligence of numbers, no name of magistrate, nor of politike superioritie; no vse of service, of riches or of povertie; no contracts, no successions, no partitions, no occupation but idle . . . no manuring of lands, no vse of wine, corn or metal."

Since it is thus proved beyond a doubt that Shakespeare was acquainted with Montaigne's Essays, it is not improbable that the resemblance between passages in that book and passages in *Hamlet* are due to something more than chance. When such passages occur in the First Quarto (1603), we must assume either that Shakespeare knew the French original, or that—as is likely enough—he may have had an opportunity of reading Florio's translation before it was published. It happened not infrequently in those days that a book was handed round in manuscript among the author's private friends five or six years before it was given to the public. Florio's close connection with the household of Southampton renders it almost certain that Shakespeare must have been acquainted with him; and his translation had been entered in the Stationers' Register as ready for publication so early as 1599.

Florio was born in 1545, of Italian parents, who, as Waldenses, had been forced to leave their country. He had become to all intents and purposes an Englishman, had studied and given

lessons in Italian at Oxford, had been some years in the service of the Earl of Southampton, and was married to a sister of the poet Samuel Daniel. He dedicated each separate book of his translation of Montaigne to two noble ladies. Among them we find Elizabeth, Countess of Rutland, Sidney's daughter; Lady Penelope Rich, Essex's sister; and Lady Elizabeth Grey, renowned for her beauty and learning. Each of these ladies was celebrated in a sonnet.

Every one remembers those incomparably-worded passages in *Hamlet* where the great brooder over life and death has expressed, in terms at once harsh and moving, his sense of the ruthlessness of the destructive forces of Nature, or what might be called the cynicism of the order of things. Take for instance the following (v. 1):—

"Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole? . . . As thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?

Imperious Cæsar, dead, and turn'd to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:
O that that earth which kept the world in awe
Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw!"

Hamlet's grisly jest upon the worms who are eating Polonius is a variation on the same theme (iv. 3):—

"*Ham.* A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king; and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

"*King.* What dost thou mean by this?

"*Ham.* Nothing, but to show you how a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar."

An attempt has been made to attribute these passages to the influence of Giordano Bruno; but, as Robert Beyersdorff has strikingly demonstrated,[1] this theory assumes that Bruno's doctrine was an atomistic materialism, whereas it was, in fact, pantheism, a perpetual insistence upon the unity of God and Nature. The very atoms, in Bruno, partake of spirit and life; it is not their mechanical conjunction that produces life; no, they are

[1] *Giordano Bruno und Shakespeare*, Oldenburg, 1889, p. 26.

monads. While cynicism is the keynote of these utterances of Hamlet, enthusiasm is the keynote of Bruno's. Three passages from Bruno's writings (*De la Causa* and *La Cena de le Ceneri*) have been cited as coinciding with Hamlet's words as to the transformations of matter. But in the first Bruno is speaking of the transformation of natural forms, and of the emanation of all forms from the universal soul; in the second, he is insisting that in all compound bodies there live numerous individuals who remain immortal after the dissolution of the bodies; in the third, he treats of the globe as a vast organism, which, just like animals and men, is renewed by the transformation of matter. The whole resemblance, then, between these passages and Hamlet's bitter outburst is that they treat of transformations of form and matter in Nature. In spirit they are radically different. Bruno maintains that even what seems to belong entirely to the world of matter is permeated with soul; Hamlet, on the contrary, asserts the wretchedness and transitoriness of human existence.[1]

But precisely in these points Hamlet comes very near to Montaigne, who has many expressions like those above quoted, and speaks of Sulla very much as Hamlet speaks of Alexander and Cæsar.

On a close comparison of Shakespeare's expressions with Montaigne's, their similarity is very striking. Hamlet, for example, says that Polonius is at supper, not where he eats but where he is eaten. "A certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet: we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots: your fat king, and your lean beggar, is but variable service; two dishes, but to one table: that's the end."

Compare Montaigne, Book ii. chap. 12:—

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[1] A comic analogy to Bruno's doctrine may be found in the following lines of Hotspur's (*Henry IV.*, Pt. I. iii. 1):—

"Diseased nature oftentimes breaks forth
In strange eruptions: oft the teeming earth
Is with a kind of colic pinch'd and vex'd
By the imprisoning of unruly wind
Within her womb; which, for enlargement striving,
Shakes the old beldam Earth, and topples down
Steeples and moss-grown towers."

But no one will seriously attribute this passage to the philosophical influence of Giordano Bruno. Hotspur was quite capable of hitting upon this image without any suggestion from Nola or Naples.

"He [man] need not a Whale, an Elephant, nor a Crocodile, nor any such other wilde beast, of which one alone is of power to defeat a great number of men: seely lice are able to make Silla give over his Dictatorship: The heart and life of a mighty and triumphant Emperor, is but the break-fast of a seely little Worm."

We have seen that an attempt has been made to trace to Bruno Hamlet's utterance as to the relativity of all concepts. In reality it may rather be traced to Montaigne. Hamlet, having remarked (ii. 2) that "Denmark is a prison," Rosencrantz replies, "We think not so, my lord;" whereupon Hamlet rejoins, "Why, then 'tis none to you; for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so."[1] The passage in Montaigne is almost identical (Book i. chap. 40):—

"If that which we call evill and torment, be neither torment nor evill, but that our fancie only gives it that qualitie, it is in us to change it."

We have seen that an attempt has been made to trace Hamlet's saying about death, "If it be now, 'tis not to come," &c. to Bruno's words in the dedication of his *Candelajo:* "Tutto quel ch'è o è qua o è là, o vicino o lunghi, o adesso o poi, o presso o tardi." But the same course of thought which leads Hamlet to the conclusion, "The readiness is all," is found, with the same conclusion, in the nineteenth chapter of Montaigne's first book: "That to Philosophie, is to learne how to die"—a chapter which has inspired a great many of Hamlet's graveyard cogitations.[2] Montaigne says of death:—

"Let us not forget how many waies our joyes or our feastings be subject unto death, and by how many hold-fasts shee threatens us and them. . . . It is uncertaine where death looks for us; let us expect her everie where. . . . I am ever prepared about that which I may be. . . . A man should ever be ready booted to take his journey. . . . What matter is it when it commeth, since it is unavoidable?"

Furthermore, we find striking points of resemblance between the celebrated soliloquy, "To be or not to be," and the passage

[1] This speech first occurs in the First Folio.

[2] This was first pointed out (about 1860) by Otto Ludwig. See his *Shakespeare-Studien*, p. 373. The relation between Shakespeare and Montaigne is dwelt upon in an ill-arranged book by G. F. Stedefeld: *Hamlet, ein Tendenz-Drama* (1871).

in Montaigne (Book iii. chap. 12) where he reproduces the substance of Socrates' Apology. Socrates, as we know, suggests several different possibilities: death is either an "amendment" of our condition or the annihilation of our being; but even in the latter case it is an "amendment" to enter upon a long and peaceful night; for there is nothing better in life than a deep, calm, dreamless sleep. Shakespeare seems to have had no belief in an actual amelioration of our condition at death; Hamlet does not even mention it as a possible contingency; whereas the poet makes him dwell upon the thought of an endless sleep, and on the possibility of horrible dreams. Now and then we seem to find traces in *Hamlet* of Plato's monologue, in the vesture given to it by Montaigne. In the French text there is mention of the joy of being free in another life from having to do with unjust and corrupt judges; Hamlet speaks of freeing himself from "The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely." Some lines added in the edition of 1604 remind us forcibly of a passage in Florio's translation. Florio reproduces Montaigne's "Si c'est un anéantissement de notre être" by the phrase, "If it be a consummation of one's being." Hamlet, using a word which occurs in only two other places in Shakespeare, says, "A consummation devoutly to be wished."

Many other small coincidences can be pointed out in the use of names and turns of phrase, which do not, however, actually prove anything. Where Montaigne is describing the anarchic condition of public affairs, his words are rendered in Florio by the curiously poetic expression, "All is out of frame." This bears a certain resemblance to the phrase which Hamlet, already in the 1603 edition, employs to describe the disorganisation which has followed his father's death, "The time is out of joint." The coincidence may be fortuitous, but as one among many other points of resemblance it supports the conjecture that Shakespeare had read the translation before it was published.[1]

For the rest, Rushton, in *Shakespeare's Euphuism* (1871), and after him Beyersdorff, have pointed out not a few parallels to *Hamlet* in Lily's *Euphues*, precisely at the points where critics have sought to trace the much more improbable influence of Bruno. Beyersdorff sometimes goes too far in trying to find in *Euphues*

[1] Compare Jacob Feis, *Shakespeare and Montaigne*, pp. 64–130. Beyersdorff, *Giordano Bruno und Shakespeare*, p. 27 *et seq.*

the origin of ideas which it would be an insult to suppose that Shakespeare needed to borrow from such a source. But sometimes there is a real analogy. It has been alleged that the King must have borrowed from Bruno's philosophy the topics of consolation whereby (i. 2) he seeks to convince Hamlet of the unreasonableness of "obstinate condolement" over his father's death. As a matter of fact, the letter of Euphues to Ferardo on his daughter's death contains precisely the same arguments:—"Knowest thou not, Ferardo, that lyfe is the gifte of God, deathe the due of Nature, as we receive the one as a benefitte, so must we abide the other of necessitie," &c.

It has been suggested that where Hamlet (ii. 2) speaks of "the satirical rogue" who, in the book he is reading, makes merry over the decrepitude of old age, Shakespeare must have been alluding to a passage in Bruno's *Spaccio*, where old men are described as those who have "snow on their head and furrows in their brow." But if we insist on identifying the "satirical rogue" with any actual author (a quite unreasonable proceeding), Lily at once presents himself as answering to the description. Again and again in *Euphues*, where old men give good advice to the young, they appear with "hoary haire and watry eyes." And Euphues repulses, quite in the manner of Hamlet, an old gentleman whose moralising he regards as nothing more than the envy of decrepit age for lusty youth, and whose intellect seems to him as tottering as his legs.

Finally, an attempt has been made to refer Hamlet's harsh sayings to Ophelia, and his contemptuous utterances about women in general ("Frailty, thy name is woman," &c.), to a dialogue of Bruno's (*De la Causa IV.*) in which the pedant Pollinnio appears as a woman-hater. But the resemblance seems trifling enough when we find that in this case woman is attacked in sound theological fashion as the source of original sin and the cause of all our woe. Many expressions in *Euphues* lie infinitely nearer to Hamlet's. "What means your lordship?" Ophelia asks (iii. 1), and Hamlet replies, "That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty." Compare in *Euphues* Ferardo's words to Lucilla: "For oftentimes thy mother woulde saye, that thou haddest more beautie then was convenient for one that shoulde bee honeste," and his exclamation, "O Lucilla, Lucilla, woulde thou wert lesse

fayre!" Again, Hamlet rails against women's weakness, crying, "Wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them;" and we find in *Euphues* exactly similar outbursts: "I perceive they be rather woe vnto men, by their falsehood, gelousie, inconstancie. . . . I see they will be corasiues (corrosives)."[1] Beyersdorff, moreover, is no doubt right in suggesting that the artificial style of *Euphues* is apparent in such speeches as this of Hamlet's: "For the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness."

In *Hamlet* and elsewhere in Shakespeare we come across traces of a sort of atomistic-materialistic philosophy. In the last scene of *Julius Cæsar*, Antony actually employs with regard to Brutus the expression, "The elements so *mix'd* in him." In *Measure for Measure* (iii. 1) the Duke says to Claudio—

> "Thou art not thyself;
> For thou exist'st on many a thousand grains
> That issue out of dust."

Hamlet says (i. 2)—

> "O that this too too solid flesh would melt,
> Thaw, and dissolve itself into a dew;"

and to Horatio (iii. 2)—

> "Bless'd are those
> Whose blood and judgment are so well *co-mingled*."

It has already been pointed out how far this atomism, if we can so regard it, differs from Bruno's idealistic monadism. But in all probability we have here only the expressions of the dominant belief of Shakespeare's time, that all differences of temperament depended upon the mixture of the juices or "humours." Shakespeare is on this point, as on many others, more popular and less book-learned, more naïve and less metaphysical, than book-learned commentators are willing to allow.

Writers like Montaigne and Lyly were no doubt constantly in Shakespeare's hands while *Hamlet* was taking shape within him. But it would be absurd to suppose that he consulted them

[1] Beyersdorff, *op. cit.*, p. 33. John Lyly, *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit*, ed. Landmann, pp. 72, 75.

especially with *Hamlet* in view. He did consult authorities with regard to Hamlet, but they were men, not books, and men, moreover, with whom he was in daily intercourse. Hamlet being a Dane and his destiny being acted out in distant Denmark—a name not yet so familiar in England as it was soon to be, when, with the new King, a Danish princess came to the throne—Shakespeare would naturally seize whatever opportunities lay in his way of gathering intelligence as to the manners and customs of this little-known country.

In the year 1585 a troupe of English players had appeared in the courtyard of the Town-Hall of Elsinore. If we are justified in assuming this troupe to have been the same which we find in the following year established at the Danish Court, it numbered among its members three persons who, at the time when Shakespeare was turning over in his mind the idea of *Hamlet*, belonged to his company of actors, and probably to his most intimate circle: namely, William Kemp, George Bryan, and Thomas Pope. The first of these, the celebrated clown, belonged to Shakespeare's company from 1594 till March 1602, when he went over for six months to Henslow's company; the other two also joined Shakespeare's company as early as 1594. It was evidently from these comrades of his, and perhaps also from other English actors who, under the management of Thomas Sackville, had performed at Copenhagen in 1596 at the coronation of Christian IV., that Shakespeare gathered information on several matters relating to Denmark.

First and foremost, he picked up some Danish names, which we find, indeed, mutilated by the printers in the different texts of *Hamlet*, but which are easily recognisable. The *Rossencraft* of the First Quarto has become *Rosencraus* in the second, and *Rosincrane* in the Folio; it is clearly enough the name of the ancient Danish family of *Rosenkrans*. Thus, too, we find in the three editions the name *Gilderstone*, *Guyldensterne*, and *Guildensterne*, in which we recognise the Danish *Gyldenstierne;* while the names given to the ambassador, *Voltemar*, *Voltemand*, *Valtemand*, *Voltumand*, are so many corruptions of the Danish *Valdemar*. The name *Gertrude*, too, Shakespeare must have learned from his comrades as a Danish name; he has substituted it for the *Geruth* of the novel. In the Second Quarto it is misprinted *Gertrad*.

It is evidently in consequence of what he had learnt from his comrades that Shakespeare has transferred the action of *Hamlet* from Jutland to Elsinore, which they had visited and no doubt described to him. That is how he comes to know of the Castle at Elsinore (finished about a score of years earlier), though he does not mention the name of Kronborg.

The scene in which Polonius listens behind the arras, and in which Hamlet, in reproaching the Queen, points to the portraits of the late and of the present King, has even been regarded as proving that Shakespeare knew something of the interior of the Castle. On the stage, Hamlet is often made to wear a miniature portrait of his father round his neck, and to hold it up before his mother; but the words of the play prove incontestably that Shakespeare imagined life-sized pictures hanging on the wall. Now we find a contemporary description of a "great chamber" at Kronborg, written by an English traveller, in which occurs this passage: "It is hanged with Tapistary of fresh coloured silke without gold, wherein all the Danish kings are exprest in antique habits, according to their severall times, with their armes and inscriptions, containing all their conquests and victories."[1] It is possible, then, though not very probable, that Shakespeare may have heard of the arrangement of this room. When Polonius wanted to play the eavesdropper, it was a matter of course that he should get behind the arras; and it was easy to imagine that portraits of the kings would hang on the walls of a royal castle, without the least knowledge that this was actually the case at Kronborg.

It is probable, on the other hand, that Shakespeare made Hamlet study at Wittenberg because he knew that many Danes went to this University, which, being Lutheran, was not frequented by Englishmen. And it is quite certain that when, in the first and fifth acts, he makes trumpet-blasts and the firing of cannon accompany the healths which are drunk, he must have known that this was a specially Danish custom, and have tried to give his play local colour by introducing it. While Hamlet and his friends (i. 4) are awaiting the appearance of the Ghost, trumpets and cannon are heard "within." "What does this mean, my lord?" Horatio asks; and Hamlet answers—

[1] *New Shakspere Society's Transactions*, 1874, p. 513. Compare Schück, "Englische Komödianten in Skandinavien," *Skandinavisches Archiv.*

"The king doth wake to-night, and takes his rouse,
Keeps wassail, and the swaggering up-spring reels;
And as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down,
The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out
The triumph of his pledge."

Similarly, in the last scene of the play, the King says—

"Give me the cups;
And let the kettle to the trumpet speak,
The trumpet to the cannoneer without,
The cannons to the heavens, the heavens to earth,
'Now the king drinks to Hamlet!'"

Shakespeare must even have been eager to display his knowledge of the intemperate habits of the Danes, and the strange usages resulting therefrom, for, as Schück has ingeniously remarked, in order to bring in this piece of information, he has made Horatio, himself a Dane, ask Hamlet whether it is the custom of the country to celebrate every toast with this noise of trumpets and of ordnance. In answer to this question Hamlet speaks of the custom as though he were addressing a foreigner, and makes the profound remark that a single blemish will often mar a nation's good report, no less than an individual's, and that its character

"Shall in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault."

It is evident that Denmark "took corruption" from its drinking usages in the "censure" of the better sort of Englishmen. In a notebook kept by "Maister William Segar, Garter King at Armes," we read under the date July 14, 1603—

"That afternoone the King [of Denmark] went aboord the English ship [which was lying off Elsinore], and had a banket prepared for him vpon the vpper decks, which were hung with an Awning of cloaths of Tissue; every health reported sixe, eight, or ten shot of great Ordinance, so that during the king's abode, the ship discharged 160 shot."

Of the same king's "solemne feast to the [English] embassadour," Segar writes:—

"It were superfluous to tell you of all superfluities that were vsed; and it would make a man sick to heare of their drunken healths: vse

hath brought it into a fashion, and fashion made it a habit, which ill beseemes our nation to imitate."[1]

The King here spoken of is Christian IV., then twenty-six years of age. When he, three years afterwards, visited England, it seems as though the Court, which had previously been very sober, justified the fears of the worthy diarist by catching the infection of Danish intemperance. Noble ladies as well as gentlemen took to over-indulgence in wine. The Rev. H. Harington, in his *Nugæ Antiquæ* (edit. 1779, ii. 126), prints a letter from Sir John Harington to Mr. Secretary Barlow, giving a very humorous description of the festivities in which the Danish King took part. One day after dinner, he relates, "the representation of Solomon his temple and the coming of the Queen of Sheba was made." But alas! the lady who played the Queen, and who was to bring "precious gifts to both their Majesties, forgetting the steppes arising to the canopy, overset her caskets into his Danish Majesties lap, and fell at his feet, though I rather think it was in his face. Much was the hurry and confusion; cloths and napkins were at hand to make all clean. His Majesty then got up, and would dance with the Queen of Sheba; but he fell down and humbled himself before her, and was carried to an inner chamber, and laid on a bed of state; which was not a little defiled with the presents of the Queen which had been bestowed upon his garments; such as wine, cream, jelly, beverage, cakes, spices and other good matters." The entertainment proceeded, but most of the "presenters fell down, wine did so occupy their upper chambers." Now there entered in gorgeous array Faith, Hope, and Charity. Hope "did assay" to speak, but could not manage it, and withdrew, stammering excuses to the King; Faith staggered after her; Charity alone succeeded in kneeling at the King's feet, and when she returned to her sisters, she found them lying very sick in the lower hall. Then Victory made her entrance in bright armour, but did not triumph long, having to be led away a "silly captive" and left to sleep upon the ante-chamber stairs. Last of all came Peace, who "much contrary to her semblance, most rudely made war with her olive branch upon" those who tried, from motives of propriety, to get her out of the way.

Shakespeare, then, conceived intemperance in drinking, and

[1] *New Shakspere Society's Transactions*, 1874, p. 512.

glorification of drunkenness as a polite and admirable accomplishment, to be a Danish national vice. It is clear enough, however, that no more here than elsewhere was it his main purpose to depict a foreign people. It was not national peculiarities that interested him, but the characteristics common to humanity; and he did not need to search outside of England for the prototypes of his Polonius, his Horatio, his Ophelia, and his Hamlet.

XIII

THE PERSONAL ELEMENT IN HAMLET

In trying to bring together, as we have done, a mass of historical, dramatic, and fictional material, fragments of philosophy, and ethnographical details, which Shakespeare utilised during his work upon *Hamlet*, or which may, without his knowing it, have hovered in his memory, we do not, of course, mean to imply that the initial impulse to the work came to him from without. The piecing together of external impressions, as we have already remarked, has never produced a work of immortal poetry. In approaching the theme, Shakespeare obeyed a fundamental instinct in his nature; and as he worked it out, everything that stood in relation to it rushed together in his mind. He might have said with Goethe: "After long labour in piling up fuel and straw, I have often tried in vain to warm myself . . . until at last the spark catches all of a sudden, and the whole is wrapped in flame."

It is this flame which shines forth from *Hamlet*, shooting up so high and glowing so red that to this day it fascinates all eyes.

Hamlet assumes madness in order to lull the suspicions of the man who has murdered his father and wrongfully usurped his throne; but under this mask of madness he gives evidence of rare intelligence, deep feeling, peculiar subtlety, mordant satire, exalted irony, and penetrating knowledge of human nature.

Here lay the point of attraction for Shakespeare. The indirect form of expression had always allured him; it was the favourite method of his clowns and humourists. Touchstone employs it, and it enters largely into the immortal wit of Falstaff. We have seen how Jaques, in *As You Like It*, envied those whose privilege it was to speak the truth under the disguise of folly; we remember his sigh of longing for "as large a charter as the wind to blow on whom he pleased." He it was who

declared motley the only wear; and in his melancholy and longing Shakespeare disguised his own, exclaiming through his mouth—

> "Invest me in my motley; give me leave
> To speak my mind, and I will through and through
> Cleanse the foul body of th' infected world."

In *Hamlet* Shakespeare put this motley coat on his own shoulders; he seized the opportunity of making Hamlet, in the guise of apparent madness, speak sharp and bitter truths in a way that would not soon be forgotten. The task was a grateful one; for earnestness cuts the deeper the more it sounds like jest or triviality; and wisdom appears doubly wise when it is thrown out lightly under the mask of folly, instead of pedantically asserting itself as the fruit of reflection and experience. Difficult for any one else, to Shakespeare the enterprise was merely alluring: it was, in fact, to do what no other poet had as yet succeeded in doing—to draw a genius. Shakespeare had not far to go for his model, and genius would seem doubly effective when it wore the mask of madness, now speaking through that mouthpiece, and again unmasking itself in impassioned monologues.

It cost Shakespeare no effort to transform himself into Hamlet. On the contrary, in giving expression to Hamlet's spiritual life he was enabled quite naturally to pour forth all that during the recent years had filled his heart and seethed in his brain. He could let this creation drink his inmost heart's blood; he could transfer to it the throbbing of his own pulses. Behind its forehead he could hide his melancholy; on its tongue he could lay his wit; its eyes he could cause to glow and lighten with flashes of his own spirit.

It is true that Hamlet's outward fortunes were different enough from his. He had not lost his father by assassination; his mother had not degraded herself. But all these details were only outward signs and symbols. He had lived through all of Hamlet's experience—all. Hamlet's father had been murdered and his place usurped by his brother; that is to say, the being whom he most reverenced and to whom he owed most had been overpowered by malice and treachery, instantly forgotten and shamelessly supplanted. How often had not Shakespeare himself seen worthlessness strike greatness down and usurp its place! Hamlet's mother had married her husband's murderer; in other

words, that which he had long honoured and loved and held sacred, sacred as is a mother to her son, that on which he could not endure to see any stain, had all of a sudden shown itself impure, besmirched, frivolous, perhaps criminal. What a terrible impression must it have made upon Shakespeare himself when he first discovered the unworthiness of that which he had held in highest reverence, and when he first saw and realised that his ideal had fallen from its pedestal into the mire.

The experience which shook Hamlet's nature was no other than that which every nobly-disposed youth, on first seeing the world as it is, concentrates in the words: "Alas! life is not what I thought it was." The father's murder, the mother's possible complicity, and her indecent haste in entering upon a new wedlock, were only symptoms in the young man's eyes of the worthlessness of human nature and the injustice of life—only the individual instances from which, by instinctive generalisation, he inferred the dire disillusions and terrible possibilities of existence —only the chance occasion for the sudden vanishing of that rosy light in which everything had hitherto been steeped for him, and in the absence of which the earth seemed to him a sterile promontory, and the heavens a pestilent congregation of vapours.

Just such a crisis, bringing with it the "loss of all his mirth," Shakespeare himself had recently undergone. He had lost in the previous year the protectors of his youth. The woman he loved, and to whom he had looked up as to a being of a rarer, loftier order, had all of a sudden proved to be a heartless, faithless wanton. The friend he loved, worshipped, and adored had conspired against him with this woman, laughed at him in her arms, betrayed his confidence, and treated him with coldness and distance. Even the prospect of winning the poet's wreath had been overcast for him. Truly he too had seen his illusions vanish and his vision of the world fall to ruins.

In his first consternation he had been submissive, had stood defenceless, had spoken words without a sting, had been all mildness and melancholy. But this was not his whole, nor his inmost, nature. In his heart of hearts he knew himself a power—a power! He was incomparably armed, quick and keen of fence, full of wit and indignation, the master of them all, and infinitely greater than his fate. Burrow as they might, "it should go hard but he would delve one yard below their mines." He had suffered

many a humiliation; but the revenge which was denied him in real life he could now take incognito through Hamlet's bitter and scathing invectives.

He had seen high-born gentlemen play a princely part in the society of artists, players, men whom public opinion undervalued and contemned. Now he himself would be the high-born gentleman, would show how the truly princely spirit bore itself towards the poor artists, and give utterance to his own thoughts about art, and his conception of its value and significance.

He merged himself in Hamlet; he felt as Hamlet did; he now and then so mingled their identities that, in placing his own weightiest thoughts in Hamlet's mouth, as in the famous "To be or not to be" soliloquy, he made him think, not as a prince, but as a subject, with all the passionate bitterness of one who sees brutality and stupidity lording it in high places. Thus it was that he made Hamlet say—

> "For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
> *The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,*
> The pangs of despis'd love, *the law's delay,*
> *The insolence of office, and the spurns*
> *That patient merit of the unworthy takes,*
> When he himself might his quietus make
> With a bare bodkin?"

Every one can see that this is felt and thought from below upwards, not from above downwards, and that the words are improbable, almost impossible, in the mouth of the Prince. But they embody feelings and thoughts to which Shakespeare had recently given expression in his own name in Sonnet lxvi.:—

> "Tir'd with all these, for restful death I cry;—
> As, to behold desert a beggar born,
> And needy nothing trimm'd in jollity,
> And purest faith unhappily forsworn,
> And gilded honour shamefully misplac'd,
> And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
> And right perfection wrongfully disgrac'd,
> And strength by limping sway disabled,
> And art made tongue-tied by authority,
> And folly (doctor-like) controlling skill,
> And simple truth miscall'd simplicity,
> And captive good attending captain ill:

Tir'd with all these, from these would I be gone,
Save that, to die, I leave my love alone."

The bright view of life which had prevailed in his youth was overclouded; he saw the strength of malignity, the power of stupidity, unworthiness exalted, true desert elbowed aside. Existence turned its seamy side towards him. Through what experiences had he not come! How often, in the year that had just passed, must he have exclaimed, like Hamlet in his first soliloquy, "Frailty, thy name is woman!" and how much cause had he had to say, "Let her not walk i' the sun: conception is a blessing; but not as your daughter may conceive." So far had it gone with him that, finding everything "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable," he thought it monstrous that such an existence should be handed on from generation to generation, and that ever new hordes of miserable creatures should come into existence: "Get thee to a nunnery! Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?"

The glimpse of high life which he had seen, his relations with the Court, and the gossip from Whitehall and Greenwich which circulated through the town, had proved to him the truth of the couplet—

"Cog, lie, flatter, and face
Four ways in Court to win men grace."

Sheer criminals such as Leicester and Claudius flourished and waxed fat at Court.

What did men do at Court but truckle to the great? What throve except wordy morality, mutual espionage, artificial wit, double-tongued falsity, inveterate lack of principle, perpetual hypocrisy? What were these great ones but flatterers and lip-servers, always ready to turn their coats according to the wind? And so Polonius and Osrick, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, took shape in his imagination. They knew how to bow and cringe; they were masters of elegant phrases; they were members of the great guild of time-servers. "To be honest as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand."

And the Danish Court was only a picture in little of all Denmark—that Denmark in whose state there was something rotten, and which was to Hamlet a prison. "Then is the world one?" says Rosencrantz; and Hamlet does not recoil from the conclu-

sion: "A goodly one," he replies, "in which there are many confines, wards, and dungeons." The Court-world of *Hamlet* was but an image of the world at large.

But if this is how matters stand, if a pure and princely nature is thus placed in the world and thus surrounded, we are necessarily confronted with the great and unanswerable questions: "How comes it?" and "Why is it?" The problem of the relation of good and evil in this world, an unsolved riddle, involves further problems as to the government of the world, as to a righteous Providence, as to the relation between the world and a God. And thought—Shakespeare's no less than Hamlet's—beats at the locked door of the mystery.

XIV

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF HAMLET

THOUGH there are in *Hamlet* more direct utterances of the poet's inmost spiritual life than in any of his earlier works, he has none the less succeeded in thoroughly disengaging his hero's figure, and making it an independent entity. What he gave him of his own nature was its unfathomable depth; for the rest, he retained the situation and the circumstances much as he found them in his authorities. It cannot be denied that he thus involved himself in difficulties which he by no means entirely overcame. The old legend, with its harsh outlines, its mediæval order of ideas, its heathen groundwork under a varnish of dogmatic Catholicism, its assumption of vengeance as the unquestionable right, or rather duty, of the individual, did not very readily harmonise with the rich life of thoughts, dreams, and feelings which Shakespeare imparted to his hero. There arose a certain discrepancy between the central figure and his surroundings. A Prince who is the intellectual peer of Shakespeare himself, who knows and declares that "no traveller returns" from beyond the grave, yet sees and holds converse with a ghost. A royal youth of the Renaissance, who has gone through a foreign university, whose chief bent is towards philosophic brooding, who writes verses, who cultivates music, elocution, and rapier-fencing, and proves himself an expert in dramatic criticism, is at the same time pre-occupied with thoughts of personal and bloody vengeance. Now and then, in the course of the drama, a rift seems to open between the shell of the action and its kernel.

But Shakespeare, with his consummate instinct, managed to find an advantage precisely in this discrepancy, and to turn it to account. His Hamlet believes in the ghost and—doubts. He accepts the summons to the deed of vengeance and—delays. Much of the originality of the figure, and of the drama as a whole,

springs almost inevitably from this discrepancy between the mediæval character of the fable and its Renaissance hero, who is so deep and many-sided that he has almost a modern air.

The figure of Hamlet, as it at last shaped itself in Shakespeare's imagination and came to life in his drama, is one of the very few immortal figures of art and poetry, which, like Cervantes' Don Quixote, exactly its contemporary, and Goethe's Faust of two centuries later, present to generation after generation problems to brood over and enigmas to solve. If we compare the two great figures of Hamlet (1604) and Don Quixote (1605), we find Hamlet undoubtedly the more enigmatic and absorbing of the two. Don Quixote belongs to the past. He embodies the naïve spirit of chivalry which, having outlived its age, gives offence on all hands in a time of prosaic rationalism, and makes itself a laughing-stock through its importunate enthusiasms. He has the firm, easily-comprehensible contours of a caricature. Hamlet belongs to the future, to the modern age. He embodies the lofty and reflective spirit, standing isolated, with its severely exalted ideals, in corrupt or worthless surroundings, forced to conceal its inmost nature, yet everywhere arousing hostility. He has the unfathomable spirit and ever-changing physiognomy of genius. Goethe, in his celebrated exposition of Hamlet (*Wilhelm Meister*, Book iv. chap. 13), maintains that in this case a great deed is imposed upon a soul which is not strong enough for it:—

> "There is an oak-tree planted in a costly jar, which should have borne only pleasant flowers in its bosom; the roots expand, the jar is shivered. A lovely, pure, noble, and most moral nature, without the strength of nerve which forms a hero, sinks beneath a burden which it cannot bear and must not cast away."

This interpretation is brilliant and thoughtful, but not entirely just. One can trace in it the spirit of the period of humanity, transforming in its own image a figure belonging to the Renaissance. Hamlet cannot really be called, without qualification, "lovely, pure, noble and most moral"—he who says to Ophelia the penetratingly true, unforgettable words, "I am myself indifferent honest; but yet I could accuse me of such things, that it were better my mother had not borne me." The light of such a saying as this takes the colour out of Goethe's adjectives. It

is true that Hamlet goes on to ascribe to himself evil qualities of which he is quite innocent; but he was doubtless sincere in the general tenor of his speech, to which all men of the better sort will subscribe. Hamlet is no model of virtue. He is not simply pure, noble, moral, &c., but is, or becomes, other things as well—wild, bitter, harsh, now tender, now coarse, wrought up to the verge of madness, callous, cruel. No doubt he is too weak for his task, or rather wholly unsuited to it; but he is by no means devoid of physical strength or power of action. He is no child of the period of humanity, moral and pure, but a child of the Renaissance, with its impulsive energy, its irrepressible fulness of life and its undaunted habit of looking death in the eyes.

Shakespeare at first conceived Hamlet as a youth. In the First Quarto he is quite young, probably nineteen. It accords with this age that he should be a student at Wittenberg; young men at that time began and ended their university course much earlier than in our days. It accords with this age that his mother should address him as "boy" ("How now, boy!" iii. 4—a phrase which is deleted in the next edition), and that the word "young" should be continually prefixed to his name, not merely to distinguish him from his father. The King, too, in the early edition (not in that of 1604) currently addresses him as "son Hamlet;" and finally his mother is still young enough to arouse—or at least to enable Claudius plausibly to pretend—the passion which has such terrible results. Hamlet's speech to his mother—

> "At your age
> The hey-day of the blood is tame, it's humble,
> And waits upon the judgment,"

does not occur in the 1603 edition. The decisive proof, however, of the fact that Hamlet at first appeared in Shakespeare's eyes much younger (eleven years, to be precise) than he afterwards made him, is to be found in the graveyard scene (v. 1). In the older edition, the First Gravedigger says that the skull of the jester Yorick has lain a dozen years in the earth; in the edition of 1604 this is changed to twenty-three years. Here, too, it is explicitly indicated that Hamlet, who as a child knew Yorick, is now thirty years old; for the Gravedigger first states that he took to his trade on the very day on which Prince Hamlet was born, and a little later adds: "I have been sexton here, man and

boy, thirty years." It accords with this that the Player-King now mentions thirty years as the time that has elapsed since his marriage with the Queen, and that Ophelia (iii. 1) speaks of Hamlet as the "unmatch'd form of blown [*i.e.* mature] youth."

The process of thought in Shakespeare's mind is evident. At first it seemed to him as if the circumstances of the case demanded that Hamlet should be a youth; for thus the overwhelming effect produced upon him by his mother's prompt forgetfulness of his father and hasty marriage seemed most intelligible. He had been living far from the great world, in quiet Wittenberg, never doubting that life was in fact as harmonious as it is apt to appear in the eyes of a young prince. He believed in the realisation of ideals here on earth, imagined that intellectual nobility and fine feelings ruled the world, that justice reigned in public, faith and honour in private, life. He admired his great father, honoured his beautiful mother, passionately loved the charming Ophelia, thought nobly of humankind, and especially of women. From the moment he loses his father, and is forced to change his opinion of his mother, this serene view of life is darkened. If his mother has been able to forget his father and marry this man, what is woman worth? and what is life worth? At the very outset, then, when he has not even heard of his father's ghost, much less seen or held converse with it, sheer despair speaks in his monologue:

> "O that this too too solid flesh would melt,
> Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew:
> Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
> His canon 'gainst self-slaughter!"

Hence, also, his naïve surprise that one may smile and smile and yet be a villain. He regards what has happened as a typical occurrence, a specimen of what the world really is. Hence his words to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: "I have of late—but wherefore I know not—lost all my mirth." And those others: "What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! . . . in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god! the beauty of the world!" These words express his first bright view of life. But that has vanished, and the world is no longer anything to him but a "foul and pestilent congregation of vapours." And man! What is this

"quintessence of dust" to him? He has no pleasure in man or woman.

Hence arise his thoughts of suicide. The finer a young man's character, the stronger is his desire, on entering life, to see his ideals consummated in persons and circumstances. Hamlet suddenly realises that everything is entirely different from what he had imagined, and feels as if he must die because he cannot set it right.

He finds it very difficult to believe that the world is so bad; therefore he is always seeking for new proofs of it; therefore, for instance, he plans the performance of the play. His joy whenever he tears the mask from baseness is simply the joy of realisation, with deep sorrow in the background—abstract satisfaction produced by the feeling that at last he understands the worthlessness of the world. His divination was just—events confirm it. There is no cold-hearted pessimism here. Hamlet's fire is never quenched; his wound never heals. Laertes' poisoned blade gives the quietus to a still tortured soul.[1]

All this, though we can quite well imagine it of a man of thirty, is more natural, more what we should expect, in one of nineteen. But as Shakespeare worked on at his drama, and came to deposit in Hamlet's mind, as in a treasury, more and more of his own life-wisdom, of his own experience, and of his own keen and virile wit, he saw that early youth was too slight a framework to support this intellectual weight, and gave Hamlet the age of ripening manhood.[2]

Hamlet's faith and trust in humankind are shattered before the Ghost appears to him. From the moment when his father's spirit communicates to him a far more appalling insight into the facts of the situation, his whole inner man is in wild revolt.

This is the cause of the leave-taking, the silent leave-taking, from Ophelia, whom in letters he had called his soul's idol. His ideal of womanhood no longer exists. Ophelia now belongs to those "trivial fond records" which the sense of his great mission impels him to efface from the tablets of his memory. There is no room in his soul for his task and for her, passive and obedient

[1] See Hermann Türck: *Das psychologische Problem in der Hamlet-Tragödie.* 1890.

[2] See E. Sullivan: "On Hamlet's Age." *New Shakspere Society's Transactions.* 1880–86.

to her father as she is. Confide in her he cannot; she has shown how unequal she is to the exigencies of the situation by refusing to receive his letters and visits. She actually hands over his last letter to her father, which means that it will be shown and read at court. At last, she even consents to play the spy upon him. He no longer believes or can believe in any woman.

He intends to proceed at once to action, but too many thoughts crowd in upon him. He broods over that horror which the Ghost has revealed to him, and over the world in which such a thing could happen; he doubts whether the apparition was really his father, or perhaps a deceptive, malignant spirit; and, lastly, he has doubts of himself, of his ability to upraise and restore what has been overthrown, of his fitness for the vocation of avenger and judge. His doubt as to the trustworthiness of the Ghost leads to the performance of the play within the play, which proves the King's guilt. His feeling of his own unfitness for his task leads to continued procrastination.

During the course of the play it is sufficiently proved that he is not, in the main, incapable of action. He does not hesitate to stab the eavesdropper behind the arras; without wavering and without pity he sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to certain death; he boards a hostile ship; and, never having lost sight of his purpose, he takes vengeance before he dies. But it is clear, none the less, that he has a great inward obstacle to overcome before he proceeds to the decisive act. Reflection hinders him; his "resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," as he says in his soliloquy.

He has become to the popular mind the great type of the procrastinator and dreamer; and far on into this century, hundreds of individuals, and even whole races, have seen themselves reflected in him as in a mirror.

We must not forget, however, that this dramatic curiosity—a hero who does not act—was, to a certain extent, demanded by the technique of this particular drama. If Hamlet had killed the King directly after receiving the Ghost's revelation, the play would have come to an end with the first act. It was, therefore, absolutely necessary that delays should arise.

Shakespeare is misunderstood when Hamlet is taken for that entirely modern product—a mind diseased by morbid reflection,

without capacity for action. It is nothing less than a freak of ironic fate that *he* should have become a sort of symbol of reflective sloth, this man who has gunpowder in every nerve, and all the dynamite of genius in his nature.

It was undeniably and indubitably Shakespeare's intention to give distinctness to Hamlet's character by contrasting it with youthful energy of action, unhesitatingly pursuing its aim.

While Hamlet is letting himself be shipped off to England, the young Norwegian prince, Fortinbras, arrives with his soldiers, ready to risk his life for a patch of ground that "hath in it no profit but the name. To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it." Hamlet says to himself (iv. 4):

> "How all occasions do inform against me,
> And spur my dull revenge! . . .
> . . . I do not know
> Why yet I live to say, 'This thing's to do.'"

And he despairs when he contrasts himself with Fortinbras, the delicate and tender prince, who, at the head of his brave troops, dares death and danger "even for an egg-shell":

> "Rightly to be great
> Is not to stir without great argument,
> But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
> When honour's at the stake."

But with Hamlet it is a question of more than "honour," a conception belonging to a sphere far below his. It is natural that he should feel ashamed at the sight of Fortinbras marching off to the sound of drum and trumpet at the head of his forces—he, who has not carried out, or even laid, any plan; who, after having by means of the play satisfied himself of the King's guilt, and at the same time betrayed his own state of mind, is now writhing under the consciousness of impotence. But the sole cause of this impotence is the paralysing grasp laid on all his faculties by his new realisation of what life is, and the broodings born of this realisation. Even his mission of vengeance sinks into the background of his mind. Everything is at strife within him—his duty to his father, his duty to his mother, reverence, horror of crime, hatred, pity, fear of action, and fear of inaction. He feels, even if he does not expressly say so, how little is gained by getting rid of

a single noxious animal. He himself is already so much more than what he was at first—the youth chosen to execute a vendetta. He has become the great sufferer, who jeers and mocks, and rebukes the world that racks him. He is the cry of humanity, horror-struck at its own visage.

There is no "general meaning" on the surface of *Hamlet*. Lucidity was not the ideal Shakespeare had before him while he was producing this tragedy, as it had been when he was composing *Richard III*. Here there are plenty of riddles and self-contradictions; but not a little of the attraction of the play depends on this very obscurity.

We all know that kind of well-written book which is blameless in form, obvious in intention, and in which the characters stand out sharply defined. We read it with pleasure; but when we have read it, we are done with it. There is nothing to be read between the lines, no gulf between this passage and that, no mystic twilight anywhere in it, no shadows in which we can dream. And, again, there are other books whose fundamental idea is capable of many interpretations, and affords matter for much dispute, but whose significance lies less in what they say to us than in what they lead us to imagine, to divine. They have the peculiar faculty of setting thoughts and feelings in motion; more thoughts than they themselves contain, and perhaps of a quite different character. *Hamlet* is such a book. As a piece of psychological development, it lacks the lucidity of classical art; the hero's soul has all the untranspicuousness and complexity of a real soul; but one generation after another has thrown its imagination into the problem, and has deposited in Hamlet's soul the sum of its experience.

To Hamlet life is half reality, half a dream. He sometimes resembles a somnambulist, though he is often as wakeful as a spy. He has so much presence of mind that he is never at a loss for the aptest retort, and, along with it, such absence of mind that he lets go his fixed determination in order to follow up some train of thought or thread some dream-labyrinth. He appals, amuses, captivates, perplexes, disquiets us. Few characters in fiction have so disquieted the world. Although he is incessantly talking, he is solitary by nature. He typifies, indeed, that solitude of soul which cannot impart itself.

"His name," says Victor Hugo, "is as the name on a wood-

cut of Albert Dürer's: *Melancholia.* The bat flits over Hamlet's head; at his feet sit Knowledge, with globe and compass, and Love, with an hour-glass; while behind him, on the horizon, rests a giant sun, which only serves to make the sky above him darker." But from another point of view Hamlet's nature is that of the hurricane—a thing of wrath and fury, and tempestuous scorn, strong enough to sweep the whole world clean.

There is in him no less indignation than melancholy; in fact, his melancholy is a result of his indignation. Sufferers and thinkers have found in him a brother. Hence the extraordinary popularity of the character, in spite of its being the reverse of obvious.

Audiences and readers feel with Hamlet and understand him; for all the better-disposed among us make the discovery, when we go forth into life as grown-up men and women, that it is not what we had imagined it to be, but a thousandfold more terrible. Something is rotten in the state of Denmark. Denmark is a prison, and the world is full of such dungeons. A spectral voice says to us: "Horrible things have happened; horrible things are happening every day. Be it your task to repair the evil, to rearrange the course of things. The world is out of joint; it is for you to set it right." But our arms fall powerless by our sides. Evil is too strong, too cunning for us.

In *Hamlet*, the first philosophical drama of the modern era, we meet for the first time the typical modern character, with its intense feeling of the strife between the ideal and the actual world, with its keen sense of the chasm between power and aspiration, and with that complexity of nature which shows itself in wit without mirth, cruelty combined with sensitiveness, frenzied impatience at war with inveterate procrastination.

XV

HAMLET AS A DRAMA

LET us now look at *Hamlet* as a drama; and, to get the full impression of Shakespeare's greatness, let us first recall its purely theatrical, materially visible side, that which dwells in the memory simply as pantomime.[1]

The night-watch on the platform before the Castle of Elsinore, and the appearance of the Ghost to the soldiers and officers there. Then, in contrast to the splendidly-attired courtiers, the black-robed figure of the Prince, standing apart, a living image of grief, his countenance bespeaking both soul and intellect, but with an expression which seems to say that henceforth joy and he are strangers. Next, his meeting with his father's spirit; the oath upon the sword, with the constant change of place. Then his wild behaviour when, to hide his excitement, he feigns madness. Then the play within the play; the sword-thrust through the arras; the beautiful Ophelia with flowers and straw in her hair; Hamlet with Yorick's skull in his hand; the struggle with Laertes in Ophelia's grave, that grotesque but most significant episode. According to the custom of the time, a dumb show foretold the poisoning in the play, and this fight in the grave is the dumb show which foretells the mortal combat that is soon to take place: both are presently to be swallowed up by the grave in which they stand. Then follows the fencing-scene, during the course of which the Queen dies by the poison which the King destined for Hamlet, and Laertes by the stroke of the poisoned sword also prepared for the Prince, who, with a last great effort, kills the King, and then sinks down poisoned. This wholesale "havock" arranged by the poet, a fourfold lying-in-state, has its gloom broken by the triumphal march of young Fortinbras, which, in its turn, soon changes to a funeral measure. The whole is as effective to the eye as it is great and beautiful.

[1] K. Werder: *Vorlesungen über Hamlet*, p. 3 *et seq.*

And now add to this ocular picturesqueness of the play the fascination which it owes to the sympathy Shakespeare has made us feel for its principal character, the impression he has given us of the agonies of a strong and sensitive spirit surrounded by corruption and depravity. Hamlet was by nature candid, enthusiastic, trustful, loving; the guile of others forces him to take refuge in guile; the wickedness of others drives him to distrust and hate; and the crime committed against his murdered father calls upon him from the underworld for vengeance.

His indignation at the infamy around him is heartrending, his contempt for it is stimulating.

By nature he is a thinker. He thinks not only when he is contemplating and planning a course of action, but also from a passionate longing for comprehension in the abstract. Though he is merely making use of the players to unmask the murderer, he gives them apt and profound advice with regard to the practice of their art. When Rosencrantz and Guildenstern question him as to the reason of his melancholy, he expounds to them in words of deep significance his rooted distaste for life.

The feeling produced in him by any strong impression never finds vent in straightforward, laconic words. His speeches never take the direct, the shortest way to express his thoughts. They consist of ingenious, far-fetched similes and witty conceits, apparently remote from the matter in hand. Sarcastic and enigmatical phrases conceal his emotions. This dissimulation is forced upon him by the very strength of his feelings: in order not to betray himself, not to give way to the pain he is suffering, he must smother it in fantastic and boisterous ejaculations. Thus he shouts after having seen the apparition: "Hillo, ho, ho, boy! come, bird, come!" Thus he apostrophises the Ghost: "Well said, old mole! canst work i' the earth so fast?" And therefore, after the play has made the King betray himself, he cries: "Ah, ha! Come, some music! come, the recorders!" His feigned madness is only an intentional exaggeration of this tendency.

The horrible secret that has been discovered to him has upset his equilibrium. The show of madness enables him to find solace in expressing indirectly what it tortures him to talk of directly, and at the same time his seeming lunacy diverts attention from the real reason of his deep melancholy. He does not altogether

dissemble when he talks so wildly; given his surroundings, these fantastic and daring sarcasms are a natural enough mode of utterance for the wild agitation produced by the horror that has entered into his life; "though this be madness, yet there is method in 't." But the almost frenzied excitement into which he is so often thrown by the action of others subsides at intervals, when he feels the need for mental concentration—a craving which he satisfies in the solitary reflections forming his monologues.

When his passions are roused, he has difficulty in controlling them. It is nervous over-excitement that finds vent when he bids Ophelia get her to a nunnery, and it is in a fit of nervous frenzy that he stabs Polonius. But his passion generally strikes inwards. Constrained as he is, or thinks himself, to employ dissimulation and cunning, he is in a fever of impatience, and is for ever reviling and scoffing at himself for his inaction, as though it were due to indifference or cowardice.

Distrust, that new element in his character, makes him cautious; he cannot act on impulse, nor even speak. "There 's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark," he begins; "so great as the King" should be the continuation; but fear of being betrayed by his comrades takes possession of him, and he ends with, "but he 's an arrant knave."

He is by nature open-hearted and warm, as we see him with Horatio; he speaks to the sentinel on the platform as to a comrade; he is cordial, at first, to old acquaintances like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; and he is frank, amiable, kind without condescension, to the troupe of travelling players. But reticence has been suddenly forced upon him by the bitterest, most agonising experiences; no sooner has he put on a mask, so as not to be instantly found out, than he feels that he is being spied upon; even his friends and the woman he loves are on the side of his opponents; and though he believes his life to be threatened, he feels that he must keep silent and wait.

His mask is often enough only of gauze; if only for the sake of the spectators, Shakespeare had to make the madness transparent, that it might not pall.

Read the witty repartees of Hamlet to Polonius (ii. 2), beginning with, "What do you read, my lord?" "Words, words, words." In reality there is no trace of madness in all these keen-edged sayings, till Hamlet at last, in order to annul their effect,

concludes with the words, "For yourself, sir, should be old as I am, if, like a crab, you could go backward."

Or take the long conversation (iii. 2) between Hamlet and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern about the pipe he has sent for, and asks them to play on. The whole is a parable as simple and direct as any in the New Testament. And he points the moral with triumphant logic in poetic form—

"Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you would make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest notes to the top of my compass: and there is much music, excellent music in this little organ; yet cannot you make it speak. 'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, yet you cannot play upon me."

It is in order to account for such contemptuous and witty outbursts that Hamlet says: "I am but mad north-north-west: when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw."

To outward difficulties are added inward hindrances, which he cannot overcome. He reproaches himself passionately for this, as we have seen. But these self-reproaches of Hamlet's do not represent Shakespeare's view of his character or judgment of his action. They express the impatience of his nature, his longing for reparation, his eagerness for the triumph of the right; they do not imply his guilt.

The old doctrine of tragic guilt and punishment, which assumes that the death at the end of a tragedy must always be in some way deserved, is nothing but antiquated scholasticism, theology masking as æsthetics; and it may be regarded as an instance of scientific progress that this view of the matter, which was heretical only a generation since, is now very generally accepted. Very different was the case when the author of these lines, in his earliest published work, entered a protest against such an intrusion of traditional morality into a sphere from which it ought simply to be banished.[1]

Some critics have summarily disposed of the question of Hamlet's possible guilt by the assertion that his madness was not only assumed, but real. Brinsley Nicholson, for instance,

[1] Georg Brandes: *Æsthetiske Studier.* Essay "On the Concept: Tragic Fate."

in his essay "Was Hamlet Mad?" (*New Shakspere Society's Transactions*, 1880–86), insists on his morbid melancholy; his strange and incoherent talk after the apparition of the Ghost; his lack of any sense of responsibility for the deaths of Polonius, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern, of which he was either the direct or indirect cause; his fear of sending King Claudius to heaven by killing him while he is praying; his brutality towards Ophelia; his constant suspiciousness, &c., &c. But to see symptoms of real insanity in all this is not only a crudity of interpretation, but a misconception of Shakespeare's evident meaning. It is true that Hamlet does not dissemble as systematically and coldly as Edgar in the subsequent *King Lear;* but that is no reason why his state of mental exaltation should be mistaken for derangement. He makes use of insanity; he is not in its power.

Not that it proves really serviceable to him or facilitates his task of vengeance; on the contrary, it impedes his action by tempting him from the straight path into witty digressions and deviations. It is meant to hide his secret; but after the performance of the play the King knows it, and, though he keeps it up, the feigned madness is useless. It is because his secret is betrayed that Hamlet now, in obedience to the Ghost's command, endeavours to awaken his mother's sense of shame and to detach her from the King. But having run Polonius through the body, in the belief that he is killing his stepfather, he is put under guards and sent away, and has still farther to postpone his revenge.

While many critics of this century, especially Germans, such as Kreyssig, have contemned Hamlet as a "witty weakling," one German writer has passionately denied that Shakespeare intended to represent him as morbidly reflective. This critic, with much enthusiasm, with fierce onslaughts upon many of his countrymen, but with a conception of the play which debases its whole idea and belittles its significance, has tried to prove that the hindrances Hamlet had to contend with were purely external. I refer to the lectures on Hamlet delivered by the old Hegelian, Karl Werder, in the University of Berlin between 1859 and 1872.[1] Their train of thought, in itself not unreasonable, may be rendered thus:—

What is demanded of Hamlet? That he should kill the King immediately after the Ghost has revealed his father's fate? Good.

[1] Karl Werder: *Vorlesungen über Shakespeare's Hamlet*, 1875.

But how, after this assassination, is he to justify his deed to the court and the people, and ascend the throne? He can produce no proof whatever of the truth of his accusation. A ghost has told him; that is all his evidence. He himself is not the hereditary supreme judge of the land, deprived of his throne by a usurper. The Queen is "jointress to this warlike state." Denmark is an elective monarchy—and it is not till the very end of the play that Hamlet speaks of the King as having "popp'd in between the election and my hopes." In the eyes of all the characters in the play, the existing state of the government is quite normal. And is he to overturn it with a dagger-thrust? Will the Danish people believe his tale of the apparition and the murder? And suppose that, instead of having recourse to the dagger, he comes forward with a public accusation, can there be any doubt that such a king and such a court will speedily make away with him? For where in this court are the elder Hamlet's adherents? We see none of them. It seems as though the old hero-king had taken them all with him to the grave. What has become of his generals and of his council? Did they die before him? Or was he solitary in his greatness? Certain it is that Hamlet has no friend but Horatio, and finds no supporters at the court.

As matters stand, the truth can be brought to light only by the royal criminal's betraying himself. Hence Hamlet's perfectly logical, most ingenious device for forcing him to do so. Hamlet's object is not to take a purely material revenge for the crime, but to reinstate right and justice in Denmark, to be judge and avenger in one. And this he cannot be if he simply kills the king offhand.

All this is acute, and in part correct; only it misstates the theme of the play. Had Shakespeare had this outward difficulty in mind, he would have made Hamlet expound, or at least allude to it. As a matter of fact, Hamlet does nothing of the sort. On the contrary, he upbraids himself for his inaction and sloth, thereby indicating clearly enough that the great fundamental difficulty is an inward one, and that the real scene of the tragedy lies in the hero's soul.

Hamlet himself is comparatively planless, but, as Goethe has profoundly remarked, the play is not therefore without a plan. And where Hamlet is most hesitating, where he tries to palliate

his planlessness, there the plan speaks loudest and clearest. Where, for example, Hamlet comes upon the King at his prayers, and will not kill him, because he is not to die "in the purging of his soul" but revelling in sinful debauch, we hear Shakespeare's general idea in the words which, in the mouth of the hero, sound like an evasion. Shakespeare, not Hamlet, reserves the King for the death which in fact overtakes him just as he has poisoned Laertes's blade, seasoned "a chalice" for Hamlet, out of cowardice allowed the Queen to drain it, and been the efficient cause of both Laertes's and Hamlet's fatal wounds. Hamlet thus actually attains his declared object in allowing the King to live.

XVI

HAMLET AND OPHELIA

THERE is nothing more profoundly conceived in this play than the Prince's relation to Ophelia. Hamlet is genius in love—genius with its great demands and its highly unconventional conduct. He does not love like Romeo, with a love that takes entire possession of his mind. He has felt himself drawn to Ophelia while his father was still in life, has sent her letters and gifts, and thinks of her with an infinite tenderness; but she has not it in her to be his friend and confidant. "Her whole essence," we read in Goethe, "is ripe, sweet sensuousness." This is saying too much; it is only the songs she sings in her madness, "in the innocence of madness," as Goethe himself strikingly says, that indicate an undercurrent of sensual desire or sensual reminiscence; her attitude towards the Prince is decorous, almost to severity. Their relations to each other have been close—how close the play does not tell.

There is nothing at all conclusive in the fact that Hamlet's manner to Ophelia is extremely free, not only in the affecting scene in which he orders her to a nunnery, but still more in their conversation during the play, when his jesting speeches, as he asks to be allowed to lay his head in her lap, are more than equivocal, and in one case unequivocally loose. We have already seen (vol. i. p. 58) that this is no evidence against Ophelia's inexperience. Helena in *All's Well that Ends Well* is chastity itself, yet Parolles's conversation with her is extremely—to our way of thinking impossibly—coarse. In the year 1602, speeches like Hamlet's could be made without offence by a young prince to a virtuous maid of honour.

Whilst English Shakespearians have come forward as Ophelia's champions, several German critics (among others Tieck, Von Friesen, and Flathe) have had no doubt that her relations with

Hamlet were of the most intimate. Shakespeare has intentionally left this undecided, and it is difficult to see why his readers should not do the same.

Hamlet draws away from Ophelia from the moment when he feels himself the appointed minister of a sacred revenge. In deep grief he bids her farewell without a word, grasps her wrist, holds it at arm's length from him, "peruses" her face as if he would draw it—then shakes her arm gently, nods his head thrice, and departs with a "piteous" sigh.

If after this he shows himself hard, almost cruel, to her, it is because she was weak and tried to deceive him. She is a soft, yielding creature, with no power of resistance; a loving soul, but without the passion which gives strength. She resembles Desdemona in the unwisdom with which she acts towards her lover, but falls far short of her in warmth and resoluteness of affection. She does not in the least understand Hamlet's grief over his mother's conduct. She observes his depression without divining its cause. When, after seeing the Ghost, he approaches her in speechless agitation, she never guesses that anything terrible has happened to him; and, in spite of her compassion for his morbid state, she consents without demur to decoy him into talking to her, while her father and the King spy upon their meeting. It is then that he breaks out into all those famous speeches: "Are you honest? Are you fair?" &c.; the secret meaning of them being: You are like my mother! You too could have acted as she did!

Hamlet has not a thought for Ophelia in his excitement after the killing of Polonius; but Shakespeare gives us indirectly to understand that grief on her account overtook him afterwards—"he weeps for what is done." Later he seems to forget her, and therefore his anger at her brother's lamentations as she is placed in her grave, and his own frenzied attempt to outdo the "emphasis" of Laertes's grief, seem strange to us. But from his words we understand that she has been the solace of his life, though she could not be its stay. She on her side has been very fond of him, has loved him with unobtrusive tenderness. It is with pain she has heard him speak of his love for her as a thing of the past ("I did love you once"); with deep grief she has seen what she takes to be the eclipse of his bright spirit in madness ("Oh, what a noble mind is here o'er-

thrown!"); and at last the death of her father by Hamlet's hand deprives her of her own reason. At one blow she has lost both father and lover. In her madness she does not speak Hamlet's name, nor show any trace of sorrow that it is he who has murdered her father. Forgetfulness of this cruellest blow mitigates her calamity; her hard fate condemns her to solitude; and this solitude is peopled and alleviated by madness.

In depicting the relation between Faust and Gretchen, Goethe appropriated and reproduced many features of the relation between Hamlet and Ophelia. In both cases we have the tragic love-tie between genius and tender girlhood. Faust kills Gretchen's mother as Hamlet kills Ophelia's father. In *Faust* also there is a duel between the hero and his mistress's brother, in which the brother is killed. And in both cases the young girl in her misery goes mad. It is clear that Goethe actually had Ophelia in his thoughts, for he makes his Mephistopheles sing a song to Gretchen which is a direct imitation, almost a translation, of Ophelia's song about Saint Valentine's Day.[1] There is, however, a more delicate poetry in Ophelia's madness than in Gretchen's. Gretchen's intensifies the tragic impression of the young girl's ruin; Ophelia's alleviates both her own and the spectator's suffering.

Hamlet and Faust represent the genius of the Renaissance and the genius of modern times; though Hamlet, in virtue of his

[1] OPHELIA.

"To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine.
Then up he rose, and donn'd his clothes
And dupp'd the chamber-door;
Let in the maid, that out a maid
Never departed more."

MEPHISTOFELES.

"Was machst Du mir
Vor Liebchens Thür
Kathrinchen, hier
Bei frühem Tagesblicke?
Lass, lass es sein!
Er lässt dich ein
Als Mädchen ein
Als Mädchen nicht zurücke."

creator's marvellous power of rising above his time, covers the whole period between him and us, and has a range of significance to which we, on the threshold of the twentieth century, can foresee no limit.

Faust is probably the highest poetic expression of modern humanity—striving, investigating, enjoying, and mastering at last both itself and the world. He changes gradually under his creator's hands into a great symbol; but in the second half of his life a superabundance of allegoric traits veils his individual humanity. It did not lie in Shakespeare's way to embody a being whose efforts, like Faust's, were directed towards experience, knowledge, perception of truth in general. Even when Shakespeare rises highest, he keeps nearer the earth.

But none the less dear to us art thou, O Hamlet! and none the less valued and understood by the men of to-day. We love thee like a brother. Thy melancholy is ours, thy wrath is ours, thy contemptuous wit avenges us on those who fill the earth with their empty noise and are its masters. We know the depth of thy suffering when wrong and hypocrisy triumph, and oh! thy still deeper suffering on feeling that that nerve in thee is severed which should lead from thought to victorious action. To us, too, the voices of the mighty dead have spoken from the under-world. We, too, have seen our mother wrap the purple robe of power round the murderer of "the majesty of buried Denmark." We, too, have been betrayed by the friends of our youth; for us, too, have swords been dipped in poison. How well do we know that graveyard mood in which disgust and sorrow for all earthly things seize upon the soul. The breath from open graves has set us, too, dreaming with a skull in our hands!

XVII

HAMLET'S INFLUENCE ON LATER TIMES

If we to-day can feel with Hamlet, it is certainly no wonder that the play was immensely popular in its own day. It is easy to understand its charm for the cultivated youth of the period; but it would be surprising, if we did not realise the alertness of the Renaissance and its wonderful receptivity for the highest culture, to find that *Hamlet* was in as great favour with the lower ranks of society as with the higher. A remarkable proof of this tragedy's and of Shakespeare's popularity in the years immediately following its appearance, is afforded by some memoranda in a log-book kept by a certain Captain Keeling, of the ship *Dragon*, which, in September 1607, lay off Sierra Leone in company with another English vessel, the *Hector* (Captain Hawkins), both bound for India. They run as follows:—

"September 5 [At "Serra Leona"]. I sent the interpreter, according to his desier, abord the Hector, whear he brooke fast, and after came abord mee, wher we gave the tragedie of Hamlett.

"[Sept.] 30. Captain Hawkins dined with me, wher my companions acted Kinge Richard the Second.

"31. I envited Captain Hawkins to a ffishe dinner, and had Hamlet acted abord me: wch I permitt to keepe my people from idlenes and unlawfull games, or sleepe."

Who could have imagined that *Hamlet*, three years after its publication, would be so well-known and so dear to English sailors that they could act it for their own amusement at a moment's notice! Could there be a stronger proof of its universal popularity? It is a true picture of the culture of the Renaissance, this tragedy of the Prince of Denmark acted by common English sailors off the west coast of Africa. It is a pity that Shakespeare himself, in all human probability, never knew of it.

Hamlet's ever-increasing significance as time rolls on is pro-

portionate to his significance in his own day. A great deal in the poetry of the nineteenth century owes its origin to him. Goethe interpreted and remodelled him in *Wilhelm Meister*, and this remodelled Hamlet resembles Faust. The trio, Faust, Gretchen, Valentin, in Goethe's drama answers to the trio, Hamlet, Ophelia, Laertes. Faust transplanted into English soil produced Byron's Manfred, a true though far-off descendant of the Danish Prince. In Germany, again, the Byronic development assumed a new and Hamlet-like (or rather Yorick-like) form in Heine's bitter and fantastic wit, in his hatreds and caprices and intellectual superiority. Börne is the first to interpret Hamlet as the German of his day, always moving in a circle and never able to act. But he feels the mystery of the play, and says aptly and beautifully, "Over the picture hangs a veil of gauze. We want to lift it to examine the painting more closely, but find that the veil itself is painted."

In France, the men of Alfred de Musset's generation, whom he has portrayed in his *Confessions d'un Enfant du Siècle*, remind us in many ways of Hamlet—nervous, inflammable as gunpowder, broken-winged, with no sphere of action commensurate with their desires, and with no power of action in the sphere which lay open to them. And Lorenzaccio, perhaps Musset's finest male character, is the French Hamlet—practised in dissimulation, procrastinating, witty, gentle to women yet wounding them with cruel words, morbidly desirous to atone for the emptiness of his evil life by one great deed, and acting too late, uselessly, desperately.

Hamlet, who centuries before had been young England, and was to Musset, for a time, young France, became in the 'forties, as Börne had foretold, the accepted type of Germany. "Hamlet is Germany," sang Freiligrath.[1]

Kindred political conditions determined that the figure of Hamlet should at the same period, and twenty years later to a still greater extent, dominate Russian literature. Its influence can be traced from Pushkin and Gogol to Gontscharoff and

[1] "Deutschland ist Hamlet! Ernst und stumm
In seinen Thoren jede Nacht
Geht die begrabne Freiheit um,
Und winkt den Männern auf der Wacht.
Da steht die Hohe, blank bewehrt,
Und sagt dem Zaudrer, der noch zweifelt:
'Sei mir ein Rächer, zieh dein Schwert!
Man hat mir Gift in's Ohr geträufelt.'"

Tolstoi, and it actually pervades the whole life-work of Turgueneff. But in this case Hamlet's vocation of vengeance is overlooked; the whole stress is laid on the general discrepancy between reflection and power of action.

In the development of Polish literature, too, during this century, there came a time when the poets were inclined to say: "We are Hamlet; Hamlet is Poland." We find marked traits of his character towards the middle of the century in all the imaginative spirits of Poland: in Mickiewicz, in Slowacki, in Krasinski. From their youth they had stood in his position. Their world was out of joint, and was to be set right by their weak arms. High-born and noble-minded, they feel, like Hamlet, all the inward fire and outward impotence of their youth; the conditions that surround them are to them one great horror; they are disposed at one and the same time to dreaming and to action, to over-much reflection and to recklessness.

Like Hamlet, they have seen their mother, the land that gave them birth, profaned by passing under the power of a royal robber and murderer. The court to which at times they are offered access strikes them with terror, as the court of Claudius struck terror to the Danish Prince, as the court in Krasinski's *Temptation* (a symbolic representation of the court of St. Petersburg) strikes terror to the young hero of the poem. These kinsmen of Hamlet are, like him, cruel to their Ophelia, and forsake her when she loves them best; like him, they allow themselves to be sent far away to foreign lands; and when they speak they dissemble like him—clothe their meaning in similes and allegories. What Hamlet says of himself applies to them: "Yet have I something in me dangerous." Their peculiarly Polish characteristic is that what enervates and impedes them is not their reflective but their poetic bias. Reflection is what ruins the German of this type; wild dissipation the Frenchman; indolence, self-mockery, and self-despair the Russian; but it is imagination that leads the Pole astray and tempts him to live apart from real life.

The Hamlet character presents a multitude of different aspects. Hamlet is the doubter; he is the man whom over-scrupulousness or over-deliberation condemns to inactivity; he is the creature of pure intelligence, who sometimes acts nervously, and is sometimes too nervous to act at all; and, lastly, he is the avenger, the man

who dissembles that his revenge may be the more effectual. Each of these aspects is developed by the poets of Poland. There is a touch of Hamlet in several of Mickiewicz's creations—in Wallenrod, in Gustave, in Conrad, in Robak. Gustave speaks the language of philosophic aberration; Conrad is possessed by the spirit of philosophic brooding; Wallenrod and Robak dissemble or disguise themselves for the sake of revenge, and the latter, like Hamlet, kills the father of the woman he loves. In Slowacki's work the Hamlet-type takes a much more prominent place. His Kordjan is a Hamlet who follows his vocation of avenger, but has not the strength for it. The Polish tendency to fantasticating interposes between him and his projected tyrannicide. And while Slowacki gives us the radical Hamlet type, so we find the corresponding conservative Hamlet in Krasinski. The hero of Krasinski's *Undivine Comedy* has more than one trait in common with the Prince of Denmark. He has Hamlet's sensitiveness and power of imagination. He is addicted to monologues and cultivates the drama. He has an extremely tender conscience, but can commit most cruel actions. He is punished for the excessive irritability of his character by the insanity of his wife, very much as Hamlet, by his feigned madness, leads to the real madness of Ophelia. But this Hamlet is consumed by a more modern doubt than that which besets his Renaissance prototype. Hamlet doubts whether the spirit on whose behest he is acting is more than an empty phantasm. When Count Henry shuts himself up in "the castle of the Holy Trinity," he is not sure that the Holy Trinity itself is more than a figment of the brain.

In other words: nearly two centuries and a half after the figure of Hamlet was conceived in Shakespeare's imagination, we find it living in English and French literature, and reappearing as a dominant type in German and two Slavonic languages. And now, three hundred years after his creation, Hamlet is still the confidant and friend of sad and thoughtful souls in every land. There is something unique in this. With such piercing vision has Shakespeare searched out the depths of his own, and at the same time of all human, nature, and so boldly and surely has he depicted the outward semblance of what he saw, that, centuries later, men of every country and of every race have felt their own being moulded like wax in his hand, and have seen themselves in his poetry as in a mirror.

XVIII

HAMLET AS A CRITIC

ALONG with so much else, *Hamlet* gives us what we should scarcely have expected—an insight into Shakespeare's own ideas of his art as poet and actor, and into the condition and relations of his theatre in the years 1602–3.

If we read attentively the Prince's words to the players, we see clearly why it is always the sweetness, the mellifluousness of Shakespeare's art that his contemporaries emphasise. To us he may seem audacious, harrowingly pathetic, a transgressor of all bounds; in comparison with contemporary artists—not only with the specially violent and bombastic writers, like the youthful Marlowe, but with all of them—he is self-controlled, temperate, delicate, beauty-loving as Raphael himself. Hamlet says to the players—

"Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus; but use all gently: for in the very torrent, tempest, and (as I may say) the whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O! it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who, for the most part, are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows, and noise: I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-herods Herod: pray you, avoid it.

"1 *Play.* I warrant your honour.

"*Ham.* Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor."

Here ought logically to follow a warning against the dangers of excessive softness and sweetness. But it does not come. He continues—

"Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature; *for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was, and is, to hold, as 't were. the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time, his form and pressure.* Now, this overdone, or come tardy off, though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve; the censure of the which one must, in your allowance, o'erweigh a whole theatre of others. O! there be players, that I have seen play,—and heard others praise, and that highly,—not to speak it profanely, that, neither having the accent of Christians, nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed, that I have thought that some of nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

"1 *Play.* I hope we have reformed that indifferently with us.

"*Ham.* O! reform it altogether."

Thus, although it appears to be Hamlet's wish to caution equally against too much wildness and too much tameness, his warning against tameness is of the briefest, and he almost immediately resumes his homily against exaggeration, bellowing, what we should now call ranting declamation. It is not the danger of tameness, but of violence, that is uppermost in Shakespeare's mind.

As already pointed out, it is not merely his own general effort as a dramatist which Shakespeare here formulates; he lays down a regular definition of dramatic art and its aim. It is noteworthy that this definition is identical with that which Cervantes, almost at the same time, places into the mouth of the priest in *Don Quixote.* "Comedy," he says, "should be as Tullius enjoins, a mirror of human life, a pattern of manners, a presentation of the truth."

Shakespeare and Cervantes, who shed lustre on the same age and died within a few days of each other, never heard of each other's existence; but, led by the spirit of their time, both borrowed from Cicero their fundamental conception of dramatic art. Cervantes says so openly; Shakespeare, who did not wish his Hamlet to pose as a scholar, indicates it in the words, "Whose end, both *at the first* and now, *was*, and is."

And as Shakespeare here, by the mouth of Hamlet, has expressed his own idea of his art's unalterable nature and aim, he

has also for once given vent to his passing artistic anxieties, his dissatisfaction with the position of his theatre at the moment. We have already (vol. i. p. 127) noticed the poet's complaint of the harm done to his company at this time by the rivalry of the troupe of choir-boys from St. Paul's Cathedral playing at the Blackfriars Theatre. It is in Hamlet's dialogue with Rosencrantz that this complaint occurs. There is a bitterness about the wording of it, as though the company had for the time been totally worsted. This was no doubt largely due to the circumstance that its most popular member, its clown, the famous Kemp, had just left it (in 1602), and gone over to Henslow's troupe. Kemp had from the beginning played all the chief low-comedy parts in Shakespeare's dramas—Peter and Balthasar in *Romeo and Juliet*, Shallow in *Henry IV.*, Lancelot in *The Merchant of Venice*, Dogberry in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Touchstone in *As You Like It*. Now that he had gone over to the enemy, his loss was deeply felt.

His description of the *Nine Daies Wonder*, with its arrogant dedication, has shown us how conceited he must have been. Hamlet lets us see that he had frequently annoyed Shakespeare by the irrepressible freedom of his "gags" and interpolations. From the text of the plays of an earlier period which have come down to us, we can understand that the clowns were in those days as free to do what they pleased with their parts as the Italian actors in the *Commedia dell' Arte*. Shakespeare's rich and perfect art left no room for such improvisations. Now that Kemp was gone, the poet sent the following shaft after him from the lips of Hamlet:—

> "And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them: for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too; though, in the meantime, some necessary question of the play be then to be considered: that's villainous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it."

This reproof is, however, as the reader sees, couched in quite general terms; wherefore it was allowed to stand when Kemp returned to the company. But a far sharper and much more personal attack, which appears in the edition of 1603, was expunged in the following editions (and consequently from our text of the play), as being no longer in place after the return of the

wanderer. It speaks of a clown whose witticisms are so popular that they are noted down by the gentlemen who frequent the theatre. A whole series of extremely poor specimens of his burlesque sallies is given—mere circus-clown drolleries—and then Hamlet disposes of the wretched buffoon by remarking that he "cannot make a jest unless by chance, as a blind man catcheth a hare."

It is notorious that an artist will more easily forgive an attack on himself than warm praise of a rival in the same line. There can be very little doubt that Shakespeare, in making Hamlet praise the dead Yorick, had in view the lamented Tarlton, Kemp's amiable and famous predecessor. If there had been no purpose to serve by making the skull that of a jester, it might quite as well have belonged to some old servant of Hamlet's. But if Shakespeare, in his first years of theatrical life, had known Tarlton personally, and Kemp's objectionable behaviour vividly recalled by contrast his predecessor's charming whimsicality, it was natural enough that he should combine with the attack on Kemp a warm eulogy of the great jester.[1]

Tarlton was buried on the 3rd of September 1588. This date accords with the statement in the first quarto, that Yorick has lain in the earth for a dozen years. Not till we have these facts before us can we fully understand the following strong outburst of feeling:—

"Alas, poor Yorick!—I knew him, Horatio: a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy: he hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! my gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar?"

Alas, poor Yorick! Hamlet's heartfelt lament will keep his memory alive when his Owlglass jests recorded in print are utterly forgotten.[2] His fooling was equally admired by the populace, the court, and the theatrical public. He is said to have told Elizabeth more truths than all her chaplains, and cured her melancholy better than all her physicians.

[1] Compare *New Shakspere Society's Transactions*, 1880-86, p. 60.

[2] *Tarlton's Jests and News out of Purgatory*. Edited by J. O. Halliwell. London, 1844.

Shakespeare, in *Hamlet*, has not only spoken his mind freely on theatrical matters; he has also eulogised the distinguished actor after his death, and given a great example of the courteous and becoming treatment of able actors during their lives. His Prince of Denmark stands far above the vulgar prejudice against them. And, lastly, Shakespeare has glorified that dramatic art which was the business and pleasure of his life, by making the play the effective means of bringing the truth to light and furthering the ends of justice. The acting of the drama of Gonzago's death is the hinge on which the tragedy turns. From the moment when the King betrays himself by stopping the performance, Hamlet knows all that he wants to know.

When James ascended the throne, *Hamlet* received, as it were, a new actuality, from the fact that his queen, Anne, was a Danish princess. At the splendid festival held on the occasion of the triumphal procession of King James, Queen Anne, and Prince Henry Frederick, from the Tower through the city, "the Danish March" was brilliantly performed, out of compliment to the Queen, by a band consisting of nine trumpeters and a kettledrum, stationed on a scaffolding at the side of St. Mildred's Church. How this march went we do not know; but there can be little doubt that from that time it was played in the second scene of the fifth act of *Hamlet*, where music of trumpets and drums is prescribed, and where, in our days, at the Théâtre-Français, they naïvely play, "Kong Christian stod ved höjen Mast."[1]

[1] The Danish national song of to-day, written by Ewald, and the music composed by Hartmann, 1778.

XIX

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL—ATTACKS ON PURITANISM

THE fortunes of the company having declined by reason of the competition complained of in *Hamlet*, it became necessary to intersperse a few comedies among the sombre tragedies on which alone Shakespeare's mind was now bent.

Comedies, therefore, had to be produced. But the disposition of mind in which Shakespeare had created *A Midsummer Night's Dream* had long deserted him; and infinitely remote, though so near in point of time, was the mood in which he had produced *As You Like It.*

Still the thing had to be done. He took one of his old sketches in hand again, the play called *Love's Labour's Won*, which has already been noticed (vol. i. p. 57). Its original form we do not exactly know; all we can do is to pick out the rhymed and youthfully frivolous passages as having doubtless belonged to the earlier play, to whose title there is probably a reference in Helena's words in the concluding scene:—

> "This is done.
> Will you be mine, now you are doubly won?"

It is clear that Shakespeare in his young days took hold of the subject with the purpose of making a comedy out of it. But now it did not turn out a comedy; the time was past when Shakespeare's chief strength lay in his humour. We could quite well imagine his subsequent tragedies to have been written by his Hamlet, if Hamlet had had life before him; and in the same way we could imagine this and the following play, *Measure for Measure*, to have been written by his Jaques.

We find many indications in *All's Well that Ends Well*—most, as was natural, in the first two acts—of Shakespeare's

having come straight from *Hamlet*. In the very first scene, the Countess chides Helena for the immoderate grief with which she mourns her father: it is wrong to let oneself be so overwhelmed. Just so the King speaks to Hamlet of the "obstinate condolement" to which he gives himself up. The Countess's advice to her son, when he is setting off for France, reminds us strongly of the advice Polonius gives to Laertes in exactly the same situation. She says, for instance:—

> "Thy blood and virtue
> Contend for empire in thee; and thy goodness
> Share with thy birthright! Love all, trust a few,
> Do wrong to none: be able for thine enemy
> Rather in power than use, and keep thy friend
> Under thy own life's key: be check'd for silence,
> But never tax'd for speech."

Compare with these injunctions those of Polonius:—

> "Give thy thoughts no tongue,
> Nor any unproportion'd thought his act.
> Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
> The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
> Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel;
> But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
> Of each new-hatch'd, unfledg'd comrade. Beware
> Of entrance to a quarrel; but, being in,
> Bear't that the opposed may beware of thee.
> Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice."

Notice also in this comedy the numerous sallies against court life and courtiers, which are quite in the spirit of *Hamlet*. The scene in which Polonius changes his opinion according as Hamlet thinks the cloud like a camel, a weasel, or a whale, and that in which Osric, who "did comply with his dug before he sucked it," reels off his elegant speeches, seem actually to be commented on in general terms when the Clown (ii. 2) thus discourses about the court:—

"Truly, madam, if God have lent a man any manners, he may easily put it off at court: he that cannot make a leg, put off's cap, kiss his hand, and say nothing, has neither leg, hands, lip, nor cap; and, indeed, such a fellow, to say precisely, were not for the court."

Now and again, too, we come upon expressions which recall well-known speeches of Hamlet's. For instance, when Helena (ii. 3) says to the First Lord:

"Thanks, sir; all the rest is mute,"

we are reminded of Hamlet's ever-memorable last words:

"The rest is silence."

Among other more external touches, which likewise point clearly to the period 1602–1603, may be mentioned the many subtle, cautious sallies against Puritanism which are interwoven in the play. They express the bitter contempt for demonstrative piety which filled Shakespeare's mind just at that time.

Hamlet itself had treated of a hypocrite on the largest scale. Notice, too, the stinging reference to existing conditions in Act iii. Scene 2:—

"*Hamlet.* Look you, how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within's two hours.

"*Ophelia.* Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lord.

"*Ham.* So long? Nay, then, let the devil wear black, for I'll have a suit of sables. O heavens! die two months ago, and not forgotten yet? Then there's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year; *but by'r lady, he must build churches then*, or else shall he suffer not thinking on, with the hobby-horse; whose epitaph is, 'For, O! for, O! the hobby-horse is forgot.'"

In *All's Well that Ends Well* Shakespeare has his sanctimonious enemies constantly in mind. He makes the Clown jeer at the fanatics in both the Protestant and the Catholic camp. They may be of different faiths, but they are alike in being unlucky husbands. The Clown says (i. 3):—

"Young Charbon the Puritan, and old Poysam the Papist, how soe'er their hearts are severed in religion, their heads are both one; they may joll horns together, like any deer i' the herd."

A little farther on he continues:—

"Though honesty be no Puritan, yet it will do no hurt; it will wear the surplice of humility over the black gown of a big heart."

When Lafeu (ii. 3) is talking to Parolles of the marvellous cure of the King of France which Helena has undertaken, he has a hit at those who will find matter in it for a pious treatise:—

"*Lafeu.* I may truly say, it is a novelty to the world.

"*Parolles.* It is, indeed: if you will have it in showing, you shall read it in—what do you call there?—

"*Laf.* A showing of a heavenly effect in an earthly actor."

Shakespeare clearly took a mischievous pleasure in imitating the title of a Puritanic work of edification.

This polemical tendency, which extends from *Hamlet* through *All's Well that Ends Well* to *Measure for Measure*, in the form of an increasingly marked opposition to the growing religious strictness and sectarianism of the day, with its accompaniment of hypocrisy, proves plainly that Shakespeare at this time shared the animosity of the Government towards both Puritanism and Catholicism.

Though there is little true mirth to be found in *All's Well that Ends Well*, the piece reminds us in various ways of some of Shakespeare's real comedies. The story resembles in several details that of *The Merchant of Venice*. Portia in disguise persuades the unwilling Bassanio to give up his ring to her; and Helena, in the darkness of night mistaken for another, coaxes Bertram out of the ring which he had made up his mind she should never obtain from him. In the closing scenes, both Bertram and Bassanio are minus their rings; both are wretched because they have not got them; and in both cases the knot is unravelled by their wives being found in possession of them. There is a more essential relation—that of direct contrast—between the story of *All's Well that Ends Well* and that of *The Taming of the Shrew*. The earlier comedy sets forth in playful fashion how a man by means of the attributes of his sex—physical superiority, boldness, and coolness—helped out by imperiousness, bluster, noise, and violence, wins the devotion of a passionately recalcitrant young woman. *All's Well that Ends Well* shows us how a woman, by means of the attributes of her sex—gentleness, goodness of heart, cunning, and finesse—conquers a vehemently recalcitrant man. And in both cases the pair are married before the action proper of the play begins.

Seeing that Shakespeare in *The Taming of the Shrew* followed

the older play on the same subject, and that he took the story of *All's Well that Ends Well* from Boccaccio's Gilette of Narbonne, a translation of which appeared as early as 1566 in Paynter's *Palace of Pleasure*, this contrast cannot be said to have been devised by the poet. But it is evident that one of the chief attractions of the latter subject for Shakespeare was the opportunity it offered him of delineating that rare phenomenon: a woman wooing a man and yet possessing and retaining all the charm of her sex. Shakespeare has worked out the figure of Helena with the tenderest partiality. Pity and admiration in concert seem to have guided his pen. We feel in his portraiture a deep compassion for the pangs of despised love—the compassion of one who himself has suffered—and over the whole figure of Helena he has shed a Raphael-like beauty. She wins all, charms all, wherever she goes—old and young, women and men—all except Bertram, the one in whom her life is bound up. The King and the old Lafeu are equally captivated by her, equally impressed by her excellences. Bertram's mother prizes her as if she were her daughter; more highly, indeed, than she prizes her own obstinate son. The Italian widow becomes so devoted to her that she follows her to a foreign country in order to vouch for her statement and win her back her husband.

She ventures all that she may gain her well-beloved, and in the pursuit of her aim shows an inventive capacity not common among women. For the real object of her journey to cure the King is, as she frankly confesses, to be near Bertram. As in the tale, she obtains the King's promise that she may, if she is successful in curing him, choose herself a husband among the lords of his court; but in Boccaccio it is the King who, in answer to her question as to the reward, gives her this promise of his own accord; in the play it is she who first states her wish. So possessed is she by her passion for one who does not give her a thought or a look. But when he rejects her (unlike Gilette in the tale), she has no desire to attain her object by compulsion; she simply says to the King with noble resignation—

> "That you are well restored, my lord,
> I'm glad; let the rest go."

She offers no objection when Bertram, immediately after the wedding, announces his departure, alleging pretexts which she

does not choose to see through; she suffers without a murmur when, at the moment of parting, he refuses her a kiss. When she has learnt the whole truth, she can at first utter nothing but short ejaculations (iii. 2): "My lord is gone, for ever gone." "This is a dreadful sentence!" "'Tis bitter!"—and presently she leaves her home, that she may be no hindrance to his returning to it. Predisposed though she is to self-confidence and pride, no one could possibly love more tenderly and humbly.

All the most beautiful passages of her part show by the structure of the verse and the absence of rhyme that they belong to the poet's riper period. Note, for example, the lines (i. 1) in which Helena tells how the remembrance of her dead father has been effaced in her mind by the picture of Bertram:—

> "My imagination
> Carries no favour in 't but Bertram's.
> I am undone: there is no living, none,
> If Bertram be away. It were all one
> That I should love a bright particular star,
> And think to wed it; he is so above me:
> In his bright radiance and collateral light
> Must I be comforted, not in his sphere.
> The ambition in my love thus plagues itself:
> The hind that would be mated by the lion
> Must die for love. 'Twas pretty, though a plague,
> To see him every hour: to sit and draw
> His arched brows, his hawking eye, his curls,
> In our heart's table; heart too capable
> Of every line and trick of his sweet favour:
> But now he's gone, and my idolatrous fancy
> Must sanctify his relics."

If we compare the style of this passage with that which prevails in Helena's rhymed speeches, with their euphuistic word-plays and antitheses, the difference is very striking, and we feel what a distance Shakespeare has traversed since the days of his apprenticeship. Here we find no glitter of wit, but the utterance of a heart that loves simply and deeply.

Though the play as a whole was evidently not one of those which Shakespeare cared most about, and though he has allowed things to stand in it which preclude the possibility of a satisfactory and harmonious end, yet he has evidently concentrated

his whole poetic strength on the development and perfection of Helena's most winning character. These are the terms (i. 3) in which, speaking to Bertram's mother, she makes confession of her love :—

> "Be not offended, for it hurts not him,
> That he is lov'd of me. I follow him not
> By any token of presumptuous suit;
> Nor would I have him till I do deserve him,
> Yet never know how that desert should be.
> I know I love in vain, strive against hope;
> Yet, in this captious and intenible sieve
> I still pour in the waters of my love,
> And lack not to lose still. Thus, Indian-like,
> Religious in mine error, I adore
> The sun, that looks upon his worshipper,
> But knows of him no more."

There is something in her nature which anticipates the charm, earnestness, and boundless devotion with which Shakespeare afterwards endows Imogen. When Bertram goes off to the war, simply to escape acknowledging her and living with her as his wife, she exclaims (iii. 2)—

> "Poor lord! is't I
> That chase thee from thy country, and expose
> Those tender limbs of thine to the event
> Of the none-sparing war? . . .
> O you leaden messengers,
> That ride upon the violent speed of fire,
> Fly with false aim; move the still-'pearing air,
> That sings with piercing. do not touch my lord!
> Whoever shoots at him, I set him there;
> Whoever charges on his forward breast,
> I am the caitiff that do hold him to it."

In this there is a fervour and a glow that we do not find in the earlier comedies. When one reads these verses, one understands how it is that Coleridge calls Helena, "Shakespeare's loveliest character."

Pity that this deep passion should have been inspired by so unworthy an object. It undoubtedly lessens the interest of the play that Shakespeare should not have given Bertram some more

estimable qualities along with the all too youthful and unchivalrous ones which he possesses. The poet has here been guilty of a certain negligence, which shows that it was only to parts of the play that he gave his whole mind. Bertram is right enough in refusing to have a wife thrust upon him against his will, simply because the King has a debt of gratitude to pay. But this first motive for refusing gives place to one with which we have less sympathy: to wit, pride of rank, which makes him look down on Helena as being of inferior birth, though king, courtiers, and his own mother consider her fit to rank with the best. Even this, however, need not lower Bertram irretrievably in our esteem; but he adds to it traits of unmanliness, even of baseness. For instance, he enjoins Helena, through Parolles, to invent some explanation of his sudden departure which will make the King believe it to have been a necessity; and then he leaves her, not, as he falsely declares, for two days, but for ever. His readiness to marry a daughter of Lafeu the moment the report of Helena's death has reached him is a very extraordinary preparation for the reunion of the couple at the end of the play, and reminds us unpleasantly of the exactly similar incident in *Much Ado About Nothing* (vol. i. p. 253). But, worst of all, and an indisputable dramatic mistake, is his entangling himself, just before the final reconciliation, in a web of mean lies with reference to the Italian girl to whom he had laid siege in Tuscany.

It was to make Helena's position more secure, and to avoid any suspicion of the adventuress about her, that Shakespeare invented the character of the Countess, that motherly friend whose affection sets a seal on all her merits. In the same way Parolles was invented with the purpose of making Bertram less guilty. Bertram is to be considered as ensnared by this old "fool, notorious liar, and coward" (as Helena at once calls him), who figures in the play as his evil genius.

Parolles in *Love's Labour's Won* was doubtless a gay and purely farcical figure—the first slight sketch for Falstaff. Coming after Falstaff, he necessarily seems a weak repetition; but this is no fault of the poet's. Still, it is very plain that in the re-writing Shakespeare's attempt at gaiety missed fire. His frame of mind was too serious; the view of the subject from the moral standpoint displaces and excludes pure pleasure in its comicality. Parolles, who has Falstaff's vices without a gleam of his genius,

brings anything but unmixed merriment in his train. The poet is at pains to impress on us the lesson we ought to learn from Parolles's self-stultification, and the shame that attends on his misdeeds. Thus the Second Lord (iv. 3), speaking of the rascality he displays in his outpourings when he is blindfolded, says—

"I will never trust a man again for keeping his sword clean, nor believe he can have everything in him by wearing his apparel neatly."

And Parolles himself says when his effrontery is crushed (iv. 3)—

"If my heart were great,
'Twould burst at this. Captain I'll be no more;
But I will eat and drink, and sleep as soft
As captain shall: simply the thing I am
Shall make me live. *Who knows himself a braggart,*
Let him fear this; for it will come to pass
That every braggart shall be found an ass."

The other comic figure, the Clown, witty as he is, has not the serene gaiety of the earlier comedies. He speaks here and there, as already noted (vol. i. p. 60), in the youthfully whimsical style of the earliest comedies; but as a humoristic house-fool he does not rank with such a sylvan fool as Touchstone, a creation of a few years earlier, nor with the musical court-fool in *Twelfth Night.*

A single passage in *All's Well that Ends Well* has always struck me as having a certain personal note. It is one of those which were quite evidently added at the time of the re-writing. The King is speaking of Bertram's deceased father, and quotes his words (i. 2)—

"'Let me not live,'—
Thus his good melancholy oft began,
On the catastrophe and heel of pastime,
When it was out,—'Let me not live,' quoth he,
'After my flame lacks oil, to be the snuff
Of younger spirits, whose apprehensive senses
All but new things disdain.' . . .
This he wish'd:
I, after him, do after him wish too."

A courtier objects to this despondent utterance—

"You are lov'd, sir;
They that least lend it you shall lack you first."

Whereupon the King replies with proud humility—

"I fill a place, I know 't."

These words could not have been written save by a mature man, who has seen impatient youth pressing forward to take his place, and who has felt the sting of its criticism. The disposition of mind which here betrays itself foretells that overpowering sense of the injustice of men and of things which is soon to take possession of Shakespeare's soul.

XX

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

A COVERT polemical intention could be vaguely divined here and there in *All's Well that Ends Well.* It contained, as we have seen, some incidental mockery of the increasing Puritanism of the time, with its accompaniment of self-righteousness, moral intolerance, and unctuous hypocrisy. The bent of thought which gave birth to these sallies reappears still more clearly in the choice of the theme treated in *Measure for Measure.*

The plot of *All's Well that Ends Well* turns on the incident, familiar in every literature, of one woman passing herself off for another at a nocturnal rendezvous, without the substitution being detected by the man—an incident so fruitful in dramatic situations, that even its gross improbability has never deterred poets from making use of it.

A standing variation of this theme, also to be found in the most diverse literatures, is as follows:—A man is condemned to death. His mistress, his wife, or his sister implores the judge to pardon him. The judge promises, on condition that she shall pass a night with him, to let the prisoner go free, but afterwards has him executed all the same.

This subject has been treated over and over again from mediæval times down to our own days, its latest appearances, probably, being in Paul Heyse's novel, *Der Kinder Sünde der Väter Fluch,* and in Victorien Sardou's play *La Tosca.* In Shakespeare's time it appeared in the form of an Italian novella in Giraldi Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* (1565), on which an English dramatist, George Whetstone, founded his play, *The Right Excellent and Famous History of Promos and Cassandra* (1578), and also a prose story in his *Heptameron of Civil Discourses,* published in 1582. Whetstone's utterly lifeless and characterless comedy is the immediate source from which Shakespeare derived the outlines of the story. He is indebted to Whetstone for nothing else.

What attracted Shakespeare to this unpleasant subject was clearly his indignation at the growing Pharisaism in matters of sexual morality which was one outcome of the steady growth of Puritanism among the middle classes. It was a consequence of his position as an actor and theatrical manager that he saw only the ugliest side of Puritanism—the one it turned towards him.

Its estimable sides well deserved a poet's sympathy. Small wonder, indeed, that independent and pious men should seek the salvation of their souls without the bounds of the Anglican State Church, with its Thirty-Nine Articles, to which all clergymen and state officials were bound to swear, and to which all citizens must make submission. It was a punishable offence to use any other ritual than the official one, or even to refuse to go to church. The Puritans, who dreamed of leading the Christian Church back to its original purity, and who had returned home after their banishment during the reign of Mary with the ideal of a democratic Church before their eyes, could not possibly approve of a State Church subject to the crown, or of such an institution as Episcopacy. Some of them looked to Scottish Presbyterianism as a worthy model, and desired to see Church government by laymen, the elders of the congregation, introduced into England, in place of the spiritual aristocracy of the bishops. Others went still farther, denied the necessity of one common form of worship for all, and desired to have the Church broken up into independent congregations, in which any believer might officiate as priest. We have here the germs of the great party division in Cromwell's time into Presbyterians and Independents.

So far as we can see, Shakespeare took no interest whatever in any of these ecclesiastical or religious movements. He came into contact with Puritanism only in its narrow and fanatical hatred of his art, and in its severely intolerant condemnation and punishment of moral, and especially of sexual, frailties. All he saw was its Pharisaic aspect, and its often enough only simulated virtue.

It was his indignation at this hypocritical virtue that led him to write *Measure for Measure*. He treated the subject as he did, because the interests of the theatre demanded that the woof of comedy should be interwoven with the severe and sombre warp of tragedy. But what a comedy! Dark, tragic, heavy as the poet's mood—a tragi-comedy, in which the unusually broad and

realistic comic scenes, with their pictures of the dregs of society, cannot relieve the painfulness of the theme, or disguise the positively criminal nature of the action. One feels throughout, even in the comic episodes, that Shakespeare's burning wrath at the moral hypocrisy of self-righteousness underlies the whole structure like a volcano, which every moment shoots up its flames through the superficial form of comedy and the interludes of obligatory merriment.

And yet it is not really against hypocrisy that his attack is aimed. At this stage of his development he is far too great a psychologist to depict a ready-made, finished hypocrite. No, he shows us how weak even the strictest Pharisee will prove, if only he happens to come across the temptation which really tempts him; and how such a man's desire, if it meets with opposition, reveals in him quite another being—a villain, a brute beast—who allows himself actions worse a hundredfold than those which, in the calm superiority of a spotless conscience, he has hitherto punished in others with the utmost severity.

It is not a type of Shakespeare's opponents that he here unmasks and brands—it is a man in many ways above the average type, as he saw it. The chief character in *Measure for Measure* is the judge of public morality, the hard and stern *Censor morum*, who in his moral fanaticism believes that he can root out vice by persecuting its tools, and imagines that he can purify and reform society by punishing every transgression, however natural and comparatively harmless, as a capital crime. The play shows us how this man, as soon as a purely sensual passion takes possession of him, does not hesitate to commit, under the mask of piety, a crime against real morality so revolting and so monstrous that no expression of loathing and contempt would be too severe for it, and scarcely any punishment too rigorous.

From its nature such a drama ought to end by appeasing in some satisfactory manner the craving for justice awakened in the spectator. But comedy was what Shakespeare's company wanted; and besides, it would have been unwise, and perhaps even dangerous, to carry to extremities this question of the punishment of moral hypocrisy. So the knot in the play was summarily loosed, without any great expenditure of pathos, by the provident care and timely intervention of a wise and invisibly omnipresent prince, an occidental Haroun-al-Raschid. Fastidious in his choice

of means this prince was not. With an ingenuity which is profoundly unsatisfactory to any one of the least delicacy of feeling, he substitutes a lovable girl, whom the iniquitous judge had at one time promised to marry, for the beautiful young woman who is the object of his bestial desire.

The Duke, wishing to test his servants, gives out that he is leaving Vienna on a long journey. He intrusts the regency during his absence to Angelo, an official of high standing and reputation.

No sooner does Angelo come into power than he begins a regular crusade against licentiousness and all laxity in the domain of morals. In the first place, he decrees that all houses of ill-fame in the city of Vienna are to be pulled down. In the older drama by Whetstone, which Shakespeare used as a foundation for his play, there was a whole troop of disreputable personages, procuresses, prostitutes, bullies, improper characters of every description. Shakespeare retains part of this company; he has a single procuress, Mistress Overdone, who reminds us slightly of Doll Tearsheet, a single bully, that very amusing personage, Pompey; and he adds to them an extremely entertaining character, the utterly dissolute but witty tattler and liar, Lucio.

But the chief alteration he makes in the subject-matter of the play is that the Duke, disguised as a friar, is witness from the beginning of Angelo's abuse of his power as ruler and judge. Among other advantages resulting from this modification, we must reckon the fact that the spectators are thus reassured in advance as to the final issue. On the Duke's disguise, moreover, depends most of the comic effect arising out of the character of Lucio, who is constantly repeating to him the most absurd slanders about himself, as if he had them from the best authority. Further, the Duke's concealed presence is essential to the other great change made in the story, namely, that Isabella is not really required to sacrifice herself for her brother, her place being filled, as in *All's Well that Ends Well*, by a woman who has old claims on the man concerned. In this manner the too revoltingly painful part of the subject is avoided.

Shakespeare has imagined one of the men who were the bitterest enemies of his art and his calling invested with absolute power, and using it to proceed against immorality with cruel rigour. The first step is his attack on common prostitution,

which he persuades himself he can exterminate. This vain imagination is repeatedly ridiculed. "What shall become of me?" says Mistress Overdone. "Come; fear not you: good counsellors lack no clients." In the Act ii. sc. 1 we read:—

"*Escalus.* How would you live, Pompey? by being a bawd? What do you think of the trade, Pompey? is it a lawful trade?

"*Pompey.* If the law would allow it, sir.

"*Escal.* But the law will not allow it, Pompey; nor it shall not be allowed in Vienna.

"*Pomp.* Does your worship mean to geld and splay all the youth of the city.

"*Escal.* No, Pompey.

"*Pomp.* Truly, sir, in my poor opinion, they will to't then."

And Lucio (iii. 2) also ridicules Angelo's severity as fruitless:—

"*Lucio.* A little more lenity to lechery would do no harm in him: something too crabbed that way, friar.

"*Duke.* It is too general a vice, and severity must cure it.

"*Lucio.* Yes, in good sooth, the vice is of a great kindred: it is well allied; but it is impossible to extirp it quite, friar, till eating and drinking be put down. They say, this Angelo was not made by man and woman, after this downright way of creation: is it true, think you?"

But besides taking strict proceedings against actual debauchery, Angelo revives an old law which has long been in disuse—according to the Duke for fourteen, according to Claudio for nineteen years—making death the punishment of all sexual commerce without marriage; and by this law young Claudio is condemned to death for his relation to Juliet.

It was an innocent relation. He says (i. 3):—

"She is fast my wife
Save that we do the denunciation lack
Of outward order: this we came not to,
Only for propagation of a dower
Remaining in the coffer of her friends."

But this avails nothing. An example is to be made. It is in vain that even the highly respectable Provost feels compassion for him, and says (ii. 2):—

"All sects, all ages smack of this vice, and he
To die for it!"

The young men of the town cannot explain this insane severity in any other way than by the supposition that Lord Angelo is a man with "snow-broth" in his veins in place of blood.

It soon appears, however, that he is not the man of ice he is taken to be.

Escalus, an old, honourable nobleman, bids him bear in mind that though his own virtue be of the straitest, it has, perhaps, never been tempted; had it been exposed to temptations, it might not have stood the test better than that of others. Angelo answers haughtily that to be tempted is one thing, to fall another. But now comes Claudio's sister, Isabella, young, charming, and intelligent, and beseeches him to spare her brother's life (ii. 2):—

> "Good, good my lord, bethink you:
> Who is it that hath died for this offence?
> There's many have committed it."

He is inexorable. She shows the unreason of punishing so stringently the errors of love:

> "*Isab.* Could great men thunder
> As Jove himself does, Jove would ne'er be quiet,
> For every pelting, petty officer
> Would use his heaven for thunder; nothing but thunder.—
> Merciful heaven!
> Thou rather with thy sharp and sulphurous bolt
> Splitt'st the unwedgeable and gnarled oak,
> Than the soft myrtle."

And she continues in such a strain, that we cannot but hear the poet's voice through hers:—

> "But man, proud man!
> Drest in a little brief authority,
> Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd,
> His glassy essence,—like an angry ape,
> Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
> As make the angels weep; who, with our spleens,
> Would all themselves laugh mortal."

And she appeals to his own self-knowledge:—

> "Go to your bosom;
> Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know
> That's like my brother's fault."

He invites her to come again the next day; and hardly is she gone when, in a monologue, he reveals his hateful passion, and even hints at his still more hateful purpose of forcing her to gratify it in payment for her brother's release.

He makes her his proposal. She is appalled; she now sees, like Hamlet, what life can be, what undreamt-of horrors can happen, to what a pitch villainy can be carried, even on the judgment-seat:—

> "O, 'tis the cunning livery of hell,
> The damned'st body to invest and cover
> In princely guards! Dost thou think, Claudio?—
> If I would yield him my virginity,
> Thou mightst be freed."

She cannot even denounce him, for, as he himself points out to her, no one will believe her; his stainless name, his strict life and high rank, will stifle the accusation if she dares to make it. Feeling himself safe, he is doubly audacious. Thus, when, at the conclusion of the play (v. 3), she lays her indictment before the reinstated Duke, Angelo says brazenly, "My lord, her wits, I fear me, are not firm." Then follows, as if in continuation of Isabella's just-quoted speech, the fiery protest springing from the poet's intensest conviction:—

> "Make not impossible
> That which but seems unlike. 'Tis not impossible,
> But one, the wicked'st caitiff on the ground,
> May seem as shy, as grave, as just, as absolute,
> As Angelo."

(See vol. i. p. 282.)

But the protest has no immediate result. Isabella is, for the time being, sent to prison for slandering a man of unblemished honour. And the irony is kept up to the last. The Duke, in his character as a friar, has learnt bitter lessons; amongst others, that there is hardly enough honesty in the world to hold society together. But when he himself, in his disguise, relates what he has witnessed, his own faithful servants are on the point of sending him also to prison. In his role of Haroun-al-Raschid, he has seen and realised that law is made to serve as a screen for might. Thus he says—

> "My business in this state
> Made me a looker-on here in Vienna,

Where I have seen corruption boil and bubble
Till it o'er-run the stew: laws for all faults,
But faults so countenanc'd, that the strong statutes
Stand like the forfeits in a barber's shop,
As much in mock as mark.
Escal. Slander to the state! Away with him to prison."

As a play, *Measure for Measure* rests entirely on three scenes: the one in which Angelo is tempted by Isabella's beauty; that in which he makes the shameless proposal that she shall give her honour in exchange for her brother's life; and, thirdly, that most dramatic one in which Claudio, after first hearing with fortitude and indignation what his sister has to tell him of Angelo's baseness, breaks down, and, like Kleist's Prince of Homburg two centuries later, begins meanly to beg for his life. Round these principal scenes are grouped the many excellent and vigorously realistic comic passages, treated in a spirit which afterwards revived in Hogarth and Thackeray; and other scenes designed solely to retard the dramatic wheel a little, which, therefore, jar upon us as conventional. It is, for example, an entirely unjustifiable experiment which the Duke tries on Isabella in the fourth act, when he falsely assures her that her brother's head has already been cut off and sent to Angelo. This is introduced solely for the sake of an effect at the end.

In this very unequally elaborated play, it is evident that Shakespeare cared only for the main point—the blow he was striking at hypocrisy. And it is probable that he here ventured as far as he by any means dared. It is a giant stride from the stingless satire on Puritanism in the character of Malvolio to this representation of a Puritan like Angelo. Probably for this very reason, Shakespeare has tried in every way to shield himself. The subject is treated entirely as a comedy. There is a threat of executing first Claudio, then the humorous scoundrel Barnardine, whose head is to be delivered instead of Claudio's; Barnardine is actually brought on the scene directly before execution, and the spectators sit in suspense; but all ends well at last, and the head of a man already dead is sent to Angelo. A noble maiden is threatened with dishonour; but another woman, Mariana, who was worthy of a better fate, keeps tryst with Angelo in her stead, and this danger is over. Finally, threats of retribution close round Angelo, the villain, himself; but after all he escapes

unpunished, being merely obliged to marry the amiable girl whom he had at an earlier period deserted. In this way the play's terrible impeachment of hypocrisy is most carefully glozed over, and along with it the pessimism which animates the whole.

For it is remarkable how deeply pessimistic is the spirit of this play. When the Duke is exhorting Claudio (iii. 1) not to fear his inevitable fate, he goes farther in his depreciation of human life than Hamlet himself when his mood is blackest:—

> "Reason thus with life:—
> If I do lose thee, I do lose a thing
> That none but fools would keep; a breath thou art,
> Servile to all the skyey influences,
> That do this habitation, where thou keep'st,
> Hourly afflict. Merely, thou art death's fool;
> For him thou labour'st by thy flight to shun,
> And yet runn'st toward him still.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Happy thou art not;
> For what thou hast not, still thou striv'st to get,
> And what thou hast, forgett'st. Thou art not certain;
> For thy complexion shifts to strange effects,
> After the moon. If thou art rich, thou'rt poor;
> For, like an ass, whose back with ingots bows,
> Thou bear'st thy heavy riches but a journey,
> And death unloads thee. Friends hast thou none;
> For thine own bowels, which do call thee sire,
> The mere effusion of thy proper loins,
> Do curse the gout, serpigo, and the rheum,
> For ending thee no sooner. Thou hast nor youth, nor age,
> But, as it were, an after-dinner's sleep,
> Dreaming on both; for all thy blessed youth
> Becomes as aged, and doth beg the alms
> Of palsied eld: and when thou art old and rich,
> Thou hast neither heat, affection, limb, nor beauty
> To make thy riches pleasant. What's yet in this,
> That bears the name of life? Yet in this life
> Lie hid more thousand deaths; yet death we fear,
> That makes these odds all even."

Note with what art and care everything is here assembled that can confound and abash the normal instinct that makes for

life. Here for the first time Shakespeare anticipates Schopenhauer.

It is clear that in this play the poet was earnestly bent on proving his own standpoint to be the moral one. In hardly any other play do we find such persistent emphasis laid, with small regard for consistency of character, upon the general moral.

For example, could there be a more direct utterance than the Duke's monologue at the end of Act iii. :—

> "He who the sword of heaven will bear
> Should be as holy as severe;
> Pattern in himself to know,
> Grace to stand, and virtue go;
> More nor less to others paying,
> Than by self-offences weighing.
> Shame to him whose cruel striking
> Kills for faults of his own liking!
> Twice treble shame on Angelo,
> To weed my vice, and let his grow!"

Similarly, and in a like spirit, the moral pointer comes into play wherever there is an opportunity of showing how apt princes and rulers are to be misjudged, and how recklessly they are disparaged and slandered.

Thus the Duke says towards the close of Act iii. :—

> "No might nor greatness in mortality
> Can censure scape: black-wounding calumny
> The whitest virtue strikes. What king so strong
> Can tie the gall up in the slanderous tongue?"

And later (iv. 1), again :—

> "O place and greatness! millions of false eyes
> Are stuck upon thee. Volumes of report
> Run with these false and most contrarious quests
> Upon thy doings."

It is quite remarkable how this dwelling on baseless criticism by subjects is accompanied by a constant tendency to invoke the protection of the sovereign, or, in other words, of James I., who had just ascended the throne, and who, with his long-accumulated bitterness against Scottish Presbyterianism, was already showing himself hostile to English Puritanism. Hence the politic insist-

ence, at the close, upon a point quite irrelevant to the matter of the play: all other sins being declared pardonable, save only slander or criticism of the sovereign. Lucio alone, who, to the great entertainment of the spectators, has told lies about the Duke, and, though only in jest, has spoken ill of him, is to be mercilessly punished. To the last moment it seems as if he were to be first whipped, then hanged. And even after this sentence is commuted in order that the tone of comedy may be preserved, and he is commanded instead to marry a prostitute, it is expressly insisted that whipping and hanging ought by rights to have been his punishment. "Slandering a prince deserves it," says the Duke, at the beginning of the final speech.

This attitude of Shakespeare's presents an exact parallel to that of Molière in the concluding scene of *Tartuffe*, sixty years later. The prince, in accordance with James of Scotland's theories of princely duty, appears as the universally vigilant guardian of his people; he alone chastises the hypocrite, whose lust of power and audacity distinguish him from the rest. The appeal to the prince in *Measure for Measure* answers exactly to the great Deus-ex-machinâ speech in *Tartuffe*, which relieves the leading characters from the nightmare that has oppressed them:—

> "Nous vivons sous un prince, ennemi de la fraude,
> Un prince dont les yeux se font jour dans les cœurs
> Et que ne peut tromper tout l'art des imposteurs."

In the seventeenth century kings were still the protectors of art and artists against moral and religious fanaticism.

XXI

ACCESSION OF JAMES AND ANNE—RALEIGH'S FATE—SHAKESPEARE'S COMPANY BECOME HIS MAJESTY'S SERVANTS—SCOTCH INFLUENCE.

In *Measure for Measure* it is not only the monarchical tone of the play, but some quite definite points, that mark it out as having been produced at the time of James's accession to the throne in 1603. In the very first scene there is an allusion to the new king's nervous dislike of crowds. This peculiarity, which caused much surprise on the occasion of his entrance into England, is here placed in a flattering light. The Duke says:—

> "I'll privily away: I love the people,
> But do not like to stage me to their eyes.
> Though it do well, I do not relish well
> Their loud applause and Aves vehement,
> Nor do I think the man of safe discretion
> That does affect it."

It is also with unmistakable reference to James's antipathy for a throng that Angelo, in Act ii. sc. 4, describes the crowding of the people round a beloved sovereign as an inadmissible intrusion:—

> "So play the foolish throngs with one that swoons,
> Come all to help him, and so stop the air
> By which he should revive: and even so
> The general, subject to a well-wish'd king,
> Quit their own part, and in obsequious fondness
> Crowd to his presence, where their untaught love
> Must needs appear offence."

Elizabeth had breathed her last on the 24th of March 1603. On her deathbed, when she could no longer speak, she had made

the shape of a crown above her head with her hands, to signify that she chose as her successor one who was already a king. Her ministers had long been in secret negotiation with James VI. of Scotland, and had promised him the succession, in spite of a provision in Henry VIII.'s will which excluded his elder sister's Scottish descendants from the throne. This had to be set aside; for there was not in the younger line any personage of sufficient distinction to be at all eligible. There was obvious advantage, too, in uniting the crowns of England and Scotland on one head; too long had the neighbour kingdoms wasted each other's energies in mutual feuds. All parties in the nation agreed with the ministers in looking to James as Elizabeth's natural successor. The Protestants felt confidence in him as a Protestant; the Catholics looked for better treatment from the son of the Catholic martyr-queen; the Puritans hoped that he, as a new and peace-loving king, would sanction such alterations in the statutory form of worship as should enable them to take part in it without injury to their souls. Great expectations greeted him.

Hardly was the breath out of Queen Elizabeth's body when Sir Robert Carey, a gentleman on whom she had conferred many benefits, but who, in his anxiety to ensure the new King's favour, had post-horses standing ready at every station, galloped off to be the first to bring the news to James in Edinburgh. On the way he was thrown from his horse, which kicked him on the head; but in spite of this he reached Holyrood on the evening of the 26th of March, just after the King had gone to bed. He was hurriedly conducted into the bed-chamber, where he knelt and greeted James by the title of King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland. "Hee gave mee his hand to kisse," writes Carey, "and bade me welcome." He also promised Carey a place as Gentleman of the Bed-Chamber, and various other things, in reward for his zeal; but forgot all these promises as soon as he stood on English ground.

In London all preparations had been carefully made. A proclamation of James as King had been drawn up by Cecil during Elizabeth's lifetime, and sent to Scotland for James's sanction. This the Prime Minister read, a few hours after the Queen's death, to an assembly of the Privy Council and chief nobility, and a great crowd of the people, amidst universal approbation. Three heralds with a trumpeter repeated the proclamation in the

Tower, "whereof as well prysoners as others rejoyced, namely, the Earle of Southampton, in whom all signes of great gladnesse appeared." Not without reason; for almost the first order James gave was that a courier should convey to Southampton the King's desire that he should at once join him and accompany him on his progress through England to London, where he was to receive the oath of allegiance and to be crowned.

On the 5th of April 1603, James I. of Great Britain left Edinburgh to take possession of his new kingdom. His royal progress was a very slow one, for every nobleman and gentleman whose house he passed invited him to enter; he accepted all invitations, spent day after day in festivities, and rewarded hospitality by distributing knighthoods in unheard-of and excessive numbers. One of his actions was unequivocally censured. At Newark "was taken a cutpurse doing the deed," and James had him hanged without trial or judgment. The displeasure shown made it plain to him that he could not thus assume superiority to the laws of England. In Scotland there had been a general demand for a strong monarchy, which could hold the nobles and the clergy in check; in England the day for this was over, and the new King's successors learned to their cost the futility of trying to carry on the traditions of despotism on English soil.

James himself was received with the naïve, disinterested joy with which the mass of the people are apt to greet a new monarch, of whose real qualities nothing is yet known, and with the less disinterested flatteries by which every one who came into contact with the King sought personal favour in his eyes.

There was nothing kingly or even winning in King James's exterior. Strange that the handsome Henry Darnley and the beautiful Mary Stuart should have had such an insignificant and ungainly son! He was something over middle height, indeed, but his figure was awkward, his head lumpish, and his eyes projecting. His language was the broadest Scotch, and when he opened his mouth it was rather to spit out the words than to speak; he hustled them out so that they stumbled over each other. He talked, ate, and dressed like a peasant, and, in spite of his apparently decorous life, was addicted to the broadest improprieties of talk, even in the presence of ladies. He walked like one who has no command over his limbs, and he could never keep still, even in a room, but was always pacing up and down with clumsy,

sprawling movements. His muscles were developed by riding and hunting, but his whole appearance was wanting in dignity.

The shock inflicted on his mother during her pregnancy, by Rizzio's assassination, probably accounts for his dread of the sight of drawn steel. The terrorism in which he was brought up had increased his natural timidity. While he was yet but a youth, the French ambassador, Fontenay, summed up his description of him thus: "In one word, he is an old young man."

Now, in the thirty-sixth year of his age, he was a learned personage, full of prejudices, wanting neither in shrewdness nor in wit, but with two absorbing passions—the one for conversation on theological and ecclesiastical matters, and the other for hunting expeditions, to which he sometimes gave up so much as six consecutive days. He had not Elizabeth's political instinct; she had chosen her councillors among men of the most different parties; he admitted to his council none but those whose opinions agreed with his own. But his vanity was quite equal to hers. He had the pedant's boastfulness; he was fond of bragging, for instance, that he could do more work in one hour than others in a day; and he was especially proud of his learning. Some Shakespeare students have, as already observed, seen in him the prototype of Hamlet. He was certainly no Hamlet, but rather what Alfred Stern somewhere calls him—a Polonius on the throne. We have a description by Sir John Harington of an audience James gave him in 1604. The King "enquyrede muche of lernynge" in such a way as to remind him of "his examiner at Cambridge aforetyme," quoted scraps of Aristotle which he hardly understood himself, and made Harington read aloud part of a canto of Ariosto. Then he asked him what he "thoughte pure witte was made of," and whom it best became, and thereupon inquired whether he did not think a king ought to be "the beste clerke" in his country. Farther, "His Majestie did much presse for my opinion touchinge the power of Satane in matter of witchcraft, and . . . why the Devil did worke more with anciente women than others." This question Sir John boldly and wittily answered by reminding him of the preference for "walking in dry places" ascribed in Scripture to the Devil. James then told of the apparition of "a bloodie heade dancinge in the aire," which had been seen in Scotland before his mother's

death, and concluded: "Now, sir, you have seen my wisdome in some sorte, and I have pried into yours. I praye you, do me justice in your reporte, and, in good season, I will not fail to add to your understandinge, in suche pointes as I may find you lacke amendmente." Perhaps only one European sovereign since James has so plumed himself on his own omniscience.

James's relations with England during Elizabeth's reign had not been invariably friendly. Nourishing a lively ill-will to the Presbyterian clergy, who were always trying to interfere in matters of state, he had in 1584, at the age of eighteen, appealed to the Pope for assistance for himself and his imprisoned mother. But the very next year, in consideration of the payment of a pension of £4000 a year, he concluded a treaty with Elizabeth. When this was ratified in 1586, his mother disinherited him and nominated Philip II. her successor. At the very time when the trial of Mary Stuart was going on, James made application to have his title as heir to the throne of England acknowledged. This unworthy, unchivalrous proceeding made it impossible for him in any way to interfere with the carrying out of whatever sentence the English Government chose to pronounce in his mother's case. Nevertheless her execution naturally affected him painfully, and it was his resentment that made him hasten on his long-planned marriage with the Danish princess Anne, daughter of Frederick II.—an alliance which he knew to be disagreeable to Elizabeth. He gained a political advantage by it, Denmark waiving her claim to the Orkney Islands.

His bride, born at Skanderborg towards the close of 1574, was at the time of her marriage not fifteen years old—a pretty, fair-skinned, golden-haired girl. Daughter of a Lutheran father and the Lutheran Sophia of Mecklenburg, she had been brought up in Lutheran orthodoxy. She had received some instruction in chemistry from Tycho Brahe; but her education, on the whole, had been rather that of a spoilt child. Great ideas had been instilled into her of what it meant to belong to the royal house of Denmark, so that she agreed with her future husband in a conviction of the importance of kingly state. Other features of her character were good-humour, inborn wit, and a superficial gaiety which sometimes went to unguarded lengths. Her behaviour, only three years after her marriage, gave rise to a scandal—public opinion (doubtless unjustly) making James accessory to

the assassination of the Earl of Murray, whom it was supposed that he had good reasons for wishing out of the way.

The difficulties which beset Anne's voyage from Denmark to Scotland in 1589 are well known. A storm, for raising which many Danish "witches" and no fewer than two hundred luckless Scottish crones had to suffer at the stake, drove the bride to Oslo in Norway. The impatient bridegroom then undertook the one romantic adventure of his life and set off in search of her. He found her at Oslo, was married there, and spent the winter in Denmark.

As Queen of Scotland, Anne already showed herself possessed by the same mania for building which characterised her brother, Christian IV. As Queen of England she aroused dissatisfaction by her constant coquetting with Roman Catholicism. By her own wish, the Pope sent her gifts of all sorts of Catholic gim-cracks; they were taken from her, and the bearer was consigned to the Tower. She showed a certain amiable independence in the sympathy and good-will which she displayed towards Sir Walter Raleigh, whom her husband imprisoned in the Tower; but on the whole she was an insignificant woman, pleasure-loving and pomp-loving (consequently a patroness of those poets who, like Ben Jonson, wrote masques for court festivals), and, in contrast to the economical Elizabeth, so extravagant that she was always in debt. Very soon after her arrival in England, she owed enormous sums to jewellers and other merchants.

The new King soon disappointed the hopes which Puritans and Catholics had cherished as to his tolerance. Even during the course of his journey from Edinburgh to London numerous petitions for the better treatment of Dissenters had been handed to him, and he seemed to give good promises to both parties. But as early as January 1604, on the occasion of a conference he summoned at Hampton Court, there was a rupture between him and the Puritans—the very mention of the word "Presbyter" making him furious. The formula, "No bishop, no king," though not invented by him, expressed his principles. And when the House of Commons favoured measures of a Puritan tendency, he retaliated by proroguing Parliament, after rebuking the House in undignified and boastful terms. He complained in this speech that whereas in Scotland he had been regarded "not only as a king but as a counsellor," in England, on the contrary,

there was "nothing but curiosity from morning to evening to find fault with his propositions." "There all things warranted that came from me. Here all things suspected," &c. &c. The Puritan clergy, who refused to accept the Anglican ritual, were driven from their livings.

The Catholics fared still worse. James had at first intended to lighten the heavy penalties to which they were subject, but the discovery of Catholic conspiracies led him to change his mind. The Catholic priests and the pupils of the Jesuit schools were banished. After the discovery of Guy Fawkes's great Gunpowder Plot in 1605, the position of the Catholics naturally became as bad as possible.

One of the most marked traits in James's political character was his eagerness to bring about and preserve peace with Spain. While yet on the way to London, he ordered a cessation of all hostilities, and by 1604 he had concluded peace. One of the reasons for his at once assuming a hostile attitude towards Raleigh was that he was well acquainted with Raleigh's hatred of Spain and disinclination to peace with that country; and Raleigh increased the King's displeasure during the following months by constantly urging upon him a war policy. But there were other and less impersonal reasons for the King's hostility. Raleigh had been Elizabeth's favourite, and had in 1601 presented to her a state-paper drawn up by himself on "The Dangers of a Spanish Faction in Scotland," the rumoured contents of which had so alarmed James that he offered Elizabeth the assistance of three thousand Scottish troops against Spain. Raleigh had been an opponent of Essex, who had sought support from James and attached himself to his fortunes. And what was worse, he had an enemy, though he scarcely knew it, in the person of a man who had opposed Essex much more strongly than he, but who had, even before the Queen's death, assured James of his absolute devotion. This was Robert Cecil, who feared Raleigh's ambition and ability.

Raleigh was in the West of England when the Queen died, and could not at once join in the great rush northwards to meet King James, which emptied London of all its nobility. By the time he started, with a large retinue, to wait on the King, he had already received a kind of command not to do so, in the shape of one of the orders dispensing the recipient from attendance on

the King, which James had sent in blank to Cecil, to be filled in with the names of those whom Cecil thought he should keep at a distance. James received Raleigh ungraciously, and at once told him, with a bad pun on his name, that he had been prejudiced against him: "On my soul, man, I have heard but *rawly* of thee." A few weeks later he was deprived (though not without compensation) of the office of Captain of the Guard, which was given to a Scotchman, Sir Thomas Erskine; and within the same month he was ordered immediately to give up to the Bishop of Durham the town palace of that See, which he had occupied, and on which he had spent great sums of money.

At last, one day in July 1603, as he was standing ready to ride out with the King, he was arrested and imprisoned on a charge of high treason. This was the beginning of a long series of base proceedings against this eminent man, who had deserved so well of his country. He was a prisoner in the Tower for thirteen years, and the persecution ended only with the judicial murder which was committed when, in 1618, after making the most beautiful speech ever heard from the scaffold, he laid his head on the block with incomparable courage and calm dignity.

It is difficult for us to-day to understand how a man of Raleigh's worth could at that time be the best-hated man in England. For us he is simply, as Gardiner has expressed it, "the man who had more genius than all the Privy Council put together;" or, as Gosse has called him, "the figure which takes the same place in the field of action which Shakespeare takes in that of imagination and Bacon in that of thought." But that he was generally hated at the time of his imprisonment is certain.

Many disliked him as the enemy of Essex. It was said that in Essex's last hours Raleigh had jeered at him. Raleigh himself wrote in 1618:—

> "It is said I was a persecutor of my Lord of Essex; that I puffed out tobacco in disdain when he was on the scaffold. But I take God to witness I shed tears for him when he died. I confess I was of a contrary faction, but I knew he was a noble gentleman. Those that set me up against him [evidently Cecil] did afterwards set themselves against me."

But what mattered the falseness of the accusation if it was believed? And there were other, much less reasonable, grounds

of hatred. From one of Raleigh's letters, written in the last days of Queen Elizabeth, we learn that the tavern-keepers throughout the country held him responsible for a tax imposed on them, which was in fact due solely to the Queen's rapacity. In this letter he prays Cecil to prevail on Elizabeth to remit the tax, for, says he: "I cannot live, nor show my face out of my doors, without it, nor dare ride through the towns where these taverners dwell." It seems as if his very greatness had marked him out for universal hatred; and, being conscious of his worth, he would not stoop to a truckling policy.

There was much that was popularly winning about the tall, vigorous, rather large-boned Raleigh, with his bright complexion and his open expression; but, like a true son of the Renaissance, he challenged dislike by his pride and magnificence. His dress was always splendid, and he loved, like a Persian Shah or Indian Rajah of our day, to cover himself, down to his shoes, with the most precious jewels. When he was arrested in 1603, he had gems to the value of £4000 (about £20,000 in modern money) on his breast, and when he was thrown into prison for the last time in 1618, his pockets were found full of jewels and golden ornaments which he had hastily stripped off his dress.

He was worshipped by those who had served under him; they valued his qualities of heart as well as his energy and intellect. But the crowd, whom he treated with disdain, and the courtiers and statesmen with whom he had competed for Elizabeth's favour, saw nothing in him but matchless effrontery and unscrupulousness. In spite of the favour he enjoyed, his rivals prevented his ever attaining any of the highest posts. On those naval expeditions in which he most distinguished himself, his place was always second in command. He was baulked even in the desire which he cherished during Elizabeth's later years for a place in the Privy Council.

He was now over fifty, and aged before his time. His untrustworthy friend, Lord Cobham, was suspected of complicity in Watson's Catholic plot; and this suspicion extended to Raleigh, who was thought to have been a party to intrigues for the dethronement of James in favour of his kinswoman, Arabella Stuart. He was tried for high treason; and as the law then stood in England, any man accused of such a crime was as good as lost, however innocent he might be. "A century later,"

says Mr. Gardiner, "Raleigh might well have smiled at the evidence which was brought against him." Then the law was as cruel as it was unjust. The accused was considered guilty until he proved his innocence; no advocate was allowed to plead his cause; unprepared, at a moment's notice, he had to refute charges which had been carefully accumulated and marshalled against him during a long period. That a man should be suspected of such an enormity as desiring to bring Spanish armies on to the free soil of England was enough to deprive him at once of all sympathy. Little wonder that Raleigh, a few days after his indictment, tried to commit suicide. His famous letter to his wife, written before the attempt, gives consummate expression to a great man's despair in face of a destiny which he does not fear, yet cannot master.

While this tragedy was being enacted in the Tower, London was making magnificent preparations for the state entrance of King James and Queen Anne into their new capital. Seven beautiful triumphal arches were erected; "England's Cæsar," as Henry Petowe in his coronation ode with some little exaggeration entitled James, was exalted and glorified by the poets of the day with as great enthusiasm as though his exploits had already rivalled those of "mightiest Julius."

Henry Chettle wrote *The Shepheard's Spring Song for the Entertainment of King James, our most potent Sovereign;* Samuel Daniel, *A Panegyrike Congratulatorie to the King's Majestie;* Michael Drayton, *To the Majestie of King James, a Gratulatorie Poem.* The actor Thomas Greene composed *A Poet's Vision and a Prince's Glorie. Dedicated to the high and mightie Prince James, King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland;* and scores of other poets lifted up their voices in song. Daniel wrote a masque which was acted at Hampton Court; Dekker, a description of the King's "Triumphant Passage," with poetic dialogues; Ben Jonson, a similar description; and Drayton, a *Pæan Triumphall.* Ben Jonson also produced a masque called *Penates*, and another entitled *The Masque of Blackness;* while a host of lesser lights wrote poems in the same style. The unobtrusive, mildly flattering allusions to James, which we have found and shall presently find in Shakespeare's plays of this period, produce an exceedingly feeble, almost imperceptible effect amid this storm of adulation. To have omitted them altogether,

or to have made them in the slightest degree less deferential, would have been gratuitously and indefensibly churlish, in view of the favour which James had made haste to extend to Shakespeare's company.

It is most interesting to-day to read the programme of the royal procession from the Tower to Whitehall in 1604, in which all the dignitaries of the realm took part, and all the privileged classes, court, nobility, clergy, royal guard, were fully represented.

In the middle of the enormous procession rides the King under a canopy. Immediately before him, the dukes, marquises, eldest sons of dukes, earls, &c. &c. Immediately behind him comes the Queen, and after her all the first ladies of the kingdom—duchesses, marchionesses, countesses, viscountesses, &c. Among the ladies mentioned by name is Lady Rich, with the note, "by especiall comandement." At the foot of the page, another note runs thus: "To go as a daughter to Henry Bourchier, Earl of Essex." James desired to honour in her the memory of her ill-fated brother. Among the lawyers in the procession Sir Francis Bacon has a place of honour; he is described as "the King's Counsell at Lawe." Bacon's learning and obsequious pliancy, James's pedantry and monarchical arrogance, quickly brought these two together. But among "His Majesty's Servants," at the very head of the procession, immediately after the heralds and the Prince's and Queen's men-in-waiting, William Shakespeare was no doubt to be seen, dressed in a suit of red cloth, which the court accounts show to have been provided for him.

James was a great lover of the play, but Scotland had neither drama nor actors of her own. Not long before this, in 1599, he had vigorously opposed the resolution of his Presbyterian Council to forbid performances by English actors.

As early as May 17, 1603, he had granted the patent *Pro Laurentio Fletcher et Willielmo Shakespeare et aliis*, which promoted the Lord Chamberlain's company to be the King's own actors.

The fact that Lawrence Fletcher is named first gives us a clue to the reasons for this proceeding on the part of the King. In the records of the Town Council of Aberdeen for October 1601, there is an entry to the effect that, by special recommendation of the King, a gratuity was paid to a company of players for their

performances in the town, and that the freedom of the city was conferred on one of these actors, Lawrence Fletcher. There can be hardly any doubt that Charles Knight, in spite of Elze's objections in his *Essays on Shakespeare*, is correct in his opinion that this Fletcher was an Englishman, and that he was closely connected with Shakespeare; for the actor Augustine Philipps, who, in 1605, bequeaths thirty shillings in gold to his "fellowe" William Shakespeare, likewise bequeaths twenty shillings to his "fellowe" Lawrence Fletcher.

James arrived in London on the 7th of May 1603, removed to Greenwich on account of the plague on the 13th, and, as already mentioned, dated the patent from there on the 17th. It can scarcely be supposed that, in so short a space of time, the Lord Chamberlain's men should not only have played before James, but so powerfully impressed him that he at once advanced them to be his own company. He must evidently have known them before; perhaps he already, as King of Scotland, had some of them in his service. This supposition is supported by the fact that, as we have seen, some members of Shakespeare's company were in Aberdeen in the autumn of 1601. It is even probable that Shakespeare himself was in Scotland with his comrades. In *Macbeth*, he has altered the meadow-land, which Holinshed represents as lying around Inverness, into the heath which is really characteristic of the district; and the whole play, with its numerous allusions to Scottish affairs, bears the impress of having been conceived on Scottish soil. Possibly Shakespeare's thoughts were hovering round the Scottish tragedy while he passed along in the procession with the royal arms on his red dress.[1]

[1] S. R. Gardiner: *History of England*, vol. i. Thomas Milner: *The History of England.* Alfred Stern: *Geschichte der Revolution in England.* Gosse: *Raleigh.* J. Nicols: *The Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities of King James the First*, vol. i. Disraeli: *An Inquiry into the Literary and Political Character of James the First. Dictionary of National Biography: James, Anne.* Nathan Drake: *Shakespeare and his Times.*

XXII

MACBETH—MACBETH AND HAMLET—DIFFICULTIES ARISING FROM THE STATE OF THE TEXT

DOWDEN somewhere remarks that if Shakespeare had died at the age of forty, posterity would have said that this was certainly a great loss, but would have found comfort in the thought that *Hamlet* marked the zenith of his productive power—he could hardly have written another such masterpiece.

And now follow in rapid succession *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and the rest. *Hamlet* was not the conclusion of a career; *Hamlet* was the spring-board from which Shakespeare leaped forth into a whole new world of mystery and awe. Dowden has happily compared the tragic figures that glide one after the other across his field of vision between 1604 and 1610 with the bloody and threatening apparitions that pass before Macbeth in the witches' cavern.

The natural tendency of his youth had been to see good everywhere. He had even felt, with his King Henry, that "there is some soul of goodness in things evil." Now, when the misery of life, the problem of evil, presented itself to his inward eye, it was especially the potency of wickedness that impressed him as strange and terrible. We have seen him brooding over it in *Hamlet* and *Measure for Measure*. He had of course recognised it before, and represented it on the grandest scale; but in *Richard III.* the main emphasis is still laid on outward history; Richard is the same man from his first appearance to his last. What now fascinates Shakespeare is to show how the man into whose veins evil has injected some drops of its poison, becomes bloated, gangrened, foredoomed to self-destruction or annihilation, like Macbeth, Othello, Lear. Lady Macbeth's ambition, Iago's malice, the daughters' ingratitude, lead, step by step, to irresistible, ever-increasing calamity.

It is my conviction that *Macbeth* was the first of these subjects which Shakespeare took in hand. All we know with certainty, indeed, is that the play was acted at the Globe Theatre in 1610. Dr. Simon Forman, in his *Booke of Plaies and Notes thereon*, gave a detailed account of a performance of it at which he was present on the 20th of April of this year. But in the comedy of *The Puritan*, dating from 1607, we find an unmistakable allusion to Banquo's ghost; and the lines in the play itself (iv. 1)—

> "And some I see
> That twofold balls and treble sceptres carry,"

—a reference to the union of England and Scotland, and their conjunction with Ireland under James—would have had little effect unless spoken from the stage shortly after the event. As James was proclaimed King of Great Britain and Ireland on the 20th of October 1604, we may conclude that *Macbeth* was not produced later than 1604–1605.

At James's accession a breath of Scottish air blew over England; we feel it in *Macbeth*. The scene of the tragedy is laid in the country from which the new king came, and most true to nature is the reproduction in this dark drama of Scotland's forests and heaths and castles, her passions and her poetry.

There is much to indicate that an unbroken train of thought led Shakespeare from *Hamlet* to *Macbeth*. The personality of Macbeth is a sort of counterpart to that of Hamlet. The Danish prince's nature is passionate, but refined and thoughtful. Before the deed of vengeance which is imposed upon him he is restless, self-reproachful, and self-tormenting; but he never betrays the slightest remorse for a murder once committed, though he kills four persons before he stabs the King. The Scottish thane is the rough, blunt soldier, the man of action. He takes little time for deliberation before he strikes; but immediately after the murder he is attacked by hallucinations both of sight and hearing, and is hounded on, wild and vacillating and frenzied, from crime to crime. He stifles his self-reproaches and falls at last, after defending himself with the hopeless fury of the "bear tied to the stake."

Hamlet says:—

> "And thus the native hue of resolution
> Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought."

Macbeth, on the contrary, declares (iv. 1)—

> "From this moment
> The very firstlings of my heart shall be
> The firstlings of my hand."

They stand at opposite poles—Hamlet, the dreamer; Macbeth, the captain, "Bellona's bridegroom." Hamlet has a superabundance of culture and of intellectual power. His strength is of the kind that wears a mask; he is a master in the art of dissimulation. Macbeth is unsophisticated to the point of clumsiness, betraying himself when he tries to deceive. His wife has to beg him not to show a troubled countenance, but to "sleek o'er his rugged looks."

Hamlet is the born aristocrat: very proud, keenly alive to his worth, very self-critical—too self-critical to be ambitious in the common acceptation of the word. To Macbeth, on the contrary, a sounding title is honour, and a wreath on the head, a crown on the brow, greatness. When the Witches on the heath, and another witch, his wife in the castle, have held up before his eyes the glory of the crown and the power of the sceptre, he has found his great goal—a tangible prize in this life, for which he is willing to risk his welfare in "the life to come." Whilst Hamlet, with his hereditary right, hardly gives a thought to the throne of which he has been robbed, Macbeth murders his king, his benefactor, his guest, that he may plunder him and his sons of a chair with a purple canopy.

And yet there is a certain resemblance between Macbeth and Hamlet. One feels that the two tragedies must have been written close upon each other. In his first monologue (i. 7) Macbeth stands hesitating with Hamlet-like misgivings:—

> "If it were done, when 't is done, then 't were well
> It were done quickly: if the assassination
> Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
> With his surcease success; that but this blow
> Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
> But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,—
> We'd jump the life to come.—But in these cases
> We still have judgment here."

Hamlet says: Were we sure that there is no future life, we should seek death. Macbeth thinks: Did we not know that

judgment would come upon us here, we should care little about the life to come. There is a kinship in these contradictory reflections. But Macbeth is not hindered by his cogitations. He pricks the sides of his intent, as he says, with the spur of ambition, well knowing that it will o'erleap itself and fall. He cannot resist when he is goaded onward by a being superior to himself, a woman.

Like Hamlet, he has imagination, but of a more timorous and visionary cast. It is through no peculiar faculty in Hamlet that he sees his father's ghost; others had seen it before him and see it with him. Macbeth constantly sees apparitions that no one else sees, and hears voices that are inaudible to others.

When he has resolved on the king's death he sees a dagger in the air:—

> "Is this a dagger which I see before me,
> The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee:—
> I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
> Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
> To feeling, as to sight? or art thou but
> A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
> Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?"

Directly after the murder he has an illusion of hearing:—

> "Methought I heard a voice cry, 'Sleep no more!
> Macbeth does murder sleep.'"

And, very significantly, Macbeth hears this same voice give him the different titles which are his pride:—

> "Still it cried, 'Sleep no more!' to all the house:
> 'Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor
> Shall sleep no more, Macbeth shall sleep no more!'"

Yet another parallel shows the kinship between the Danish and the Scottish tragedy. It is in these dramas alone that the dead leave their graves and reappear on the scene of life; in them alone a breath from the spirit-world reaches the atmosphere of the living. There is no trace of the supernatural either in *Othello* or in *King Lear*.

No more here than in *Hamlet* are we to understand by the introduction of supernatural elements that an independently-

working superhuman power actively interferes in human life; these elements are transparent symbols. Nevertheless the supernatural beings that make their appearance are not to be taken as mere illusions; they are distinctly conceived as having a real existence outside the sphere of hallucination. As in *Hamlet*, the Ghost is not seen by the prince alone, so in *Macbeth* it is not only Macbeth himself who sees the Witches; they even appear with their queen, Hecate, when there is no one to see them except the spectators of the play.

It must not be forgotten that this whole spirit- and witch-world meant something quite different to Shakespeare's contemporaries from what it means to us. We cannot even be absolutely certain that Shakespeare himself did not believe in the possible existence of such beings. Great poets have seldom been consistent in their incredulity—even Holberg believed that he had seen a ghost. But Shakespeare's own attitude of mind matters less than that of the public for whom he wrote.

In the beginning of the seventeenth century the English people still believed in a great variety of evil spirits, who disturbed the order of nature, produced storms by land and sea, foreboded calamities and death, disseminated plague and famine. They were for the most part pictured as old, wrinkled women, who brewed all kinds of frightful enormities in hellish cauldrons; and when such beldams were thought to have been detected, the law took vengeance on them with fire and sword. In a sermon preached in 1588, Bishop Jewel appealed to Elizabeth to take strong measures against wizards and witches. Some years later, one Mrs. Dyer was accused of witchcraft for no other reason than that toothache had for some nights prevented the Queen from sleeping. In the small town of St. Osees in Essex alone, seventy or eighty witches were burnt. In a book called "The Discoverie of Witchcraft," published in 1584, Reginald Scott refuted the doctrine of sorcery and magic with wonderful clearness and liberal-mindedness; but his voice was lost in the chorus of the superstitious. King James himself was one of the most prominent champions of superstition. He was present in person at the trial by torture of two hundred witches who were burnt for occasioning the storm which prevented his bride's crossing to Scotland. Many of them confessed to having ridden through the air on broomsticks or invisible chariots drawn by snails, and admitted that they were

able to make themselves invisible—an art of which they, strangely enough, did not avail themselves to escape the law. In 1597 James himself produced in his *Dæmonologie* a kind of handbook or text-book of witchcraft in all its developments, and in 1598 he caused no fewer than 600 old women to be burnt. In the Parliament of 1604 a bill against sorcery was brought in by the Government and passed.

Shakespeare produced wonderful effects in *Hamlet* by drawing on this faith in spirits; the apparition on the castle platform is sublime in its way, though the speech of the Ghost is far too long. Now, in *Macbeth*, with the Witches' meeting, he strikes the keynote of the drama at the very outset, as surely as with a tuning-fork; and wherever the Witches reappear the same note recurs. But still more admirable, both psychologically and scenically, is the scene in which Macbeth sees Banquo's ghost sitting in his own seat at the banquet-table. The words run thus:—

"*Rosse.* Please it your highness
To grace us with your royal company?
Macbeth. The table's full.
Lennox. Here is a place reserv'd, sir.
Macb. Where?
Len. Here, my good lord. What is't that moves your highness?
Macb. Which of you have done this?
Lords. What, my good lord?
Macb. Thou canst not say I did it: never shake
Thy gory locks at me."

The grandeur, depth, and extraordinary dramatic and theatrical effect of this passage are almost unequalled in the history of the drama.

The same may be said of well-nigh the whole outline of this tragedy—from a dramatic and theatrical point of view it is beyond all praise. The Witches on the heath, the scene before the murder of Duncan, the sleep-walking of Lady Macbeth—so potent is the effect of these and other episodes that they are burnt for ever on the spectator's memory.

No wonder that *Macbeth* has become in later times Shakespeare's most popular tragedy—his typical one, appreciated even by those who, except in this instance, have not been able to value him as he deserves. Not one of his other dramas is so simple in

composition as this, no other keeps like this to a single plane. There is no desultoriness or halting in the action as in *Hamlet*, no double action as in *King Lear*. All is quite simple and according to rule: the snowball is set rolling and becomes the avalanche. And although there are gaps in it on account of the defective text, and although there may here and there be ambiguities—in the character of Lady Macbeth, for instance—yet there is nothing enigmatic, there are no riddles to perplex us. Nothing lies concealed between the lines; all is grand and clear—grandeur and clearness itself.

And yet I confess that this play seems to me one of Shakespeare's less interesting efforts; not from the artistic, but from the purely human point of view. It is a rich, highly moral melodrama; but only at occasional points in it do I feel the beating of Shakespeare's heart.

My comparative coolness of feeling towards *Macbeth* may possibly be due in a considerable degree to the shamefully mutilated form in which this tragedy has been handed down to us. Who knows what it may have been when it came from Shakespeare's own hand! The text we possess, which was not printed till long after the poet's death, is clipped, pruned, and compressed for acting purposes. We can feel distinctly where the gaps occur, but that is of no avail.

The abnormal shortness of the play is in itself an indication of what has happened. In spite of its wealth of incident, it is distinctly Shakespeare's shortest work. There are 3924 lines in *Hamlet*, 3599 in *Richard III.*, &c., &c., while in *Macbeth* there are only 1993.

It is plain, moreover, that the structure of the piece has been tampered with. The dialogue between Malcolm and Macduff (iv. 3), which, strictly speaking, must be called superfluous from the dramatic point of view, is so long as to form about an eighth part of the whole tragedy. It may be presumed that the other scenes originally stood in some sort of proportion to this; for there is no other instance in Shakespeare's work of a similar disproportion.

In certain places omissions are distinctly felt. Lady Macbeth (i. 5) proposes to her husband that he shall murder Duncan. He gives no answer to this. In the next scene the King arrives. In the next again, Macbeth's deliberations as to whether or not he

is to commit the murder are all over, and he is only thinking how it can be done with impunity. When he wavers, and says to his wife, "I dare do all that may become a man; who dares do more is none," her answer shows how much is wanting here:—

> "When you durst do it, then you were a man;
> And, to be more than what you were, you would
> Be so much more the man. Nor time nor place
> Did then adhere, and yet you would make both."

We spectators or readers know nothing of all this. There has not even been time for the shortest conversation between husband and wife.

Shakespeare took the material for his tragedy from the same source on which he drew for all his English histories—Holinshed's Chronicle to wit. In this case Holinshed, at no time a trustworthy historian, simply reproduced a passage of Hector Boece's *Scotorum Historiæ.* Macdonwald's rebellion and Sweno's Viking invasion are fables; Banquo and Fleance, as founders of the race of Stuart, are inventions of the chroniclers. There was a blood-feud between the house of Duncan and the house of Macbeth. Lady Macbeth, whose real name was Gruoch, was the granddaughter of a king who had been killed by Malcolm II., Duncan's grandfather. Her first husband had been burnt in his castle with fifty friends. Her only brother was killed by Malcolm's order. Macbeth's father also, Finlegh or Finley, had been killed in a contest with Malcolm. Therefore they both had the right to a blood-revenge on Duncan. Nor did Macbeth sin against the laws of hospitality in taking Duncan's life. He attacked and killed him in the open field. It is further to be observed that by the Scottish laws of succession he had a better right to the throne than Duncan. After having seized the throne he ruled firmly and justly. There is a quite adequate psychological basis for the real facts of the year 1040, though it is much simpler than that underlying the imaginary events of Holinshed's Chronicle, which form the subject of the tragedy.

Shakespeare on the whole follows Holinshed with great exactitude, but diverges from him in one or two particulars. According to the Chronicle, Banquo was accessory to the murder of Duncan; Shakespeare alters this in order to give King James a progenitor of unblemished reputation. Instead of using the

account of the murder which is given in the Chronicle, Shakespeare takes and applies to Duncan's case all the particulars of the murder of King Duffe, Lady Macbeth's grandfather, as committed by the captain of the castle of Forres, who "being the more kindled in wrath by the words of his wife, determined to follow her advice in the execution of so heinous an act." It is hardly necessary to remark that the finest parts of the drama, such as the appearance of Banquo's ghost and Lady Macbeth's sleep-walking scene, are due to Shakespeare alone.

Some sensation was made in the year 1778 by the discovery of the manuscript of *The Witch*, a play by Shakespeare's contemporary Middleton, containing in their entirety two songs which are only indicated in *Macbeth* by the quotation of their first lines. These are "Come away, come away" (iii. 5), and "Black spirits, &c." (iv. 1). A very idle dispute arose as to whether Shakespeare had here made use of Middleton or Middleton of Shakespeare. The latter is certainly the more probable assumption, if we must assume either to have borrowed from the other. It is likely enough, however, that single lines of the lesser poet have here and there been interpolated in the witch scenes of Shakespeare's text as contained in the Folio edition.

Shakespeare has employed in the treatment of this subject a style that suits it—vehement to violence, compressed to congestion—figures treading upon each other's heels, while general philosophic reflections occur but rarely. It is a style eminently fitted to express and to awaken terror; its tone is not altered, but only softened, even in the painfully touching conversation between Lady Macduff and her little son. It is sustained throughout with only one break—the excellent burlesque monologue of the Porter.

The play centres entirely round the two chief characters, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth; in their minds the essential action takes place. The other personages are only outlined.

The Witches' song, with which the tragedy opens, ends with that admirable line, in which ugliness and beauty are confounded:—

"Fair is foul, and foul is fair."

And it is significant that Macbeth, who has not heard this refrain, recalls it in his very first speech:—

"So foul and fair a day I have not seen."

It seems as if these words were ringing in his ears; and this foreshadows the mysterious bond between him and the Witches. Many of these delicate consonances and contrasts may be noted in the speeches of this tragedy.

After Lady Macbeth, who is introduced to the spectator already perfected in wickedness, has said to herself (i. 5)—

> "The raven himself is hoarse,
> That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
> Under my battlements,"

the next scene opens serenely with the charming pictures of the following dialogue:—

> "*Duncan.* This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air
> Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
> Unto our gentle senses.
> *Banquo.* This guest of summer,
> The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,
> By his lov'd mansionry, that the heaven's breath
> Smells wooingly here: no jutty, frieze,
> Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird
> Hath made his pendent bed and procreant cradle:
> Where they most breed and haunt, I have observ'd
> The air is delicate."

Then the poet immediately plunges anew into the study of this lean, slight, hard woman, consumed by lust of power and splendour. Though by no means the impassive murderess she fain would be, she yet goads her husband, by the force of her far stronger will, to commit the crime which she declares he has promised her:—

> "I have given suck, and know
> How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
> I would, while it was smiling in my face,
> Have pluck'd my nipple from its boneless gums,
> And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
> Have done to this."

So coarsely callous is she! And yet she is less hardened than she would make herself out to be; for when, just after this, she has laid the daggers ready for her husband, she says:—

> "Had he not resembled
> My father as he slept, I had done 't."

The absolutely masterly, thrilling scene between husband and wife after the murder, is followed, in horrible, humoristic contrast, by the fantastic interlude of the Porter. He conceives himself to be keeping watch at hell-gate, and admitting, amongst others, an equivocating Jesuit, with his casuistry and *reservatio mentalis;* and his soliloquy is followed by a dialogue with Macduff on the influence of drink upon erotic inclination and capacity. It is well known that Schiller, in accordance with classical prejudices, omitted the monologue in his translation, and replaced it by a pious morning-song. What seems more remarkable is that an English poet like Coleridge should have found its effect disturbing and considered it spurious. Without exactly ranking with Shakespeare's best low-comedy interludes, it affords a highly effective contrast to what goes before and what follows, and is really an invaluable and indispensable ingredient in the tragedy. A short break in the action was required at this point, to give Macbeth and his wife time to dress themselves in their night-clothes; and what interruption could be more effective than the knocking at the castle gate, which makes them both thrill with terror, and gives occasion to the Porter episode?

Another of the gems of the play is the scene (iv. 2) between Lady Macduff and her wise little son, before the murderers come and kill them both. All the witty child's sayings are interesting, and the mother's bitterly pessimistic speeches are not only wonderfully characteristic of her, but also of the poet's own present frame of mind:—

> "Whither should I fly?
> I have done no harm. But I remember now
> I am in this earthly world, where, to do harm,
> Is often laudable; to do good, sometime,
> Accounted dangerous folly: why then, alas!
> Do I put up that womanly defence,
> To say I have done no harm?"

Equally despairing is Macduff's ejaculation when he learns of the slaughter in his home: "Did heaven look on, and would not take their part?" The beginning of this lengthy scene (iv. 3), with its endless dialogue between Malcolm and Macduff, which Shakespeare has transcribed literally from his Holinshed, is weak and flagging. It presents hardly any point of interest except the far-fetched account of King Edward the Confessor's power of curing

the king's evil, evidently dragged in for the sake of paying King James a compliment which the poet knew he would value, in the lines—

> "'Tis spoken,
> To the succeeding royalty he leaves
> The healing benediction."

But the close of the scene is admirable, when Rosse breaks the news to Macduff of the attack on his castle and the massacre of his family:—

> "*Macd.* My children too?
> *Rosse.* Wife, children, servants, all
> That could be found.
> *Macd.* And I must be from thence!
> My wife kill'd too?
> *Rosse.* I have said.
> *Mal.* Be comforted:
> Let's make us medicines of our great revenge,
> To cure this deadly grief.
> *Macd.* He has no children.—All my pretty ones?
> Did you say, all?—O hell-kite!—All?
> What, all my pretty chickens, and their dam,
> At one fell swoop?
> *Mal.* Dispute it like a man.
> *Macd.* I shall do so;
> But I must also feel it as a man:
> I cannot but remember such things were,
> That were most precious to me.—*Did Heaven look on,*
> *And would not take their part?*"

The voice of revolt makes itself heard in these words, the same voice that sounds later through the despairing philosophy of *King Lear:* "As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods: They kill us for their sport." But immediately afterwards Macduff falls back on the traditional sentiment:—

> "Sinful Macduff!
> They are all struck for thee. Naught that I am,
> Not for their own demerits, but for mine,
> Fell slaughter on their souls."

Among these horror-stricken speeches there is one in particular that gives matter for reflection—Macduff's cry, "He has no

children." At the close of the third part of *Henry VI.* there is a similar exclamation of quite different import. There, when King Edward, Gloucester, and Clarence have stabbed Margaret of Anjou's son before her eyes, she says :—

> "You have no children, butchers! if you had,
> The thought of them would have stirr'd up remorse."

Many interpreters have attributed the same sense to Macduff's cry of agony; but their mistake is plain; for the context undeniably shows that the one thought of the now childless father is the impossibility of an adequate revenge.

But there is another noticeable point about this speech, "He has no children," which is, that elsewhere we are led to believe that he has children. Lady Macbeth says, "I have given suck, and know how tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me;" and we have neither learned that these children are dead nor that they were born of an earlier marriage. Shakespeare never mentions the former marriage of the historical Lady Macbeth. Furthermore, not only does she talk of children, but Macbeth himself seems to allude to sons. He says (iii. 1) :—

> "Upon my head they plac'd a fruitless crown,
> And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,
> Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,
> No son of mine succeeding. If 't be so,
> For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind."

If he had no children of his own, the last line is meaningless. Had Shakespeare forgotten these earlier speeches when he wrote that ejaculation of Macduff's? It is improbable; and, in any case, they must have been constantly brought to his mind again at rehearsals and performances of the play. We have here one of the difficulties which would be solved if we were in possession of a complete and authentic text.

The crown which the Witches promised to Macbeth soon becomes his fixed idea. He murders his king—and sleep. He slays, and sees the slain for ever before him. All that stand between him and his ambition are cut down, and afterwards raise their bloody heads as bodeful visions on his path. He turns Scotland into one great charnel-house. His mind is "full of scorpions;" he is sick with the smell of all the blood he has

shed. At last life and death become indifferent to him. When, on the day of battle, the tidings of his wife's death are brought to him, he speaks those profound words in which Shakespeare has embodied a whole melancholy life-philosophy :—

> "She should have died hereafter :
> There would have been a time for such a word.—
> To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
> To the last syllable of recorded time ;
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle !
> Life's but a walking shadow ; a poor player,
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more : it is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing."

This is the final result arrived at by Macbeth, the man who staked all to win power and glory. Without any underlining on the part of the poet, a speech like this embodies an absolute moral lesson. We feel its value all the more strongly, as Shakespeare's study of humanity in other parts of this play does not seem to have been totally unbiassed, but rather influenced by the moral impression which he desired to produce on the audience. The drama is even a little marred by the constant insistence on the *fabula docet*, the recurrent insinuation that "such is the consequence of grasping at power by the aid of crime." Macbeth, not by nature a bad man, might in the drama, as in real life, have tried to reconcile the people to that crime, which, after all, he had reluctantly committed, by making use of his power to rule well. The moral purport of the play excludes this possibility. The ice-cold, stony Lady Macbeth might be conceived as taking the consequences of her counsel and action as calmly as the high-born Locustas of the Renaissance, Catherine de' Medici, or the Countess of Somerset. But in this case we should have missed the moral lesson conveyed by her ruin, and, what would have been worse, the incomparable sleep-walking scene, which—whether it be perfectly motived or not—shows us in the most admirable manner how the sting of an evil conscience, even though it may be blunted by day, is sharpened again at night, and robs the guilty one of sleep and health.

In dealing with the plays immediately preceding *Macbeth*, we observed that Shakespeare at this period frequently gives a formal exposition of the moral to be drawn from his scenes. Possibly there is some connection between this tendency of his and the steadily-growing animosity of public opinion to the stage. In the year 1606, an edict was issued absolutely prohibiting the utterance of the name of God on the profane boards of the theatre. Not even a harmless oath was to be permitted. In view of the state of feeling which produced such an Act of Parliament, it must have been of vital importance to the tragic poet to prove as clearly as possible the strictly moral character of his works.

XXIII

OTHELLO—THE CHARACTER AND SIGNIFICANCE OF IAGO

WHEN we consider how *Macbeth* explains life's tragedy as the result of a union of brutality and malignity, or rather of brutality envenomed by malignity, we feel that the step from this to *Othello* is not a long one. But in *Macbeth* the treatment of life's tragedy as a whole, of wickedness as a factor in human affairs, lacks firmness, and is not in the great style.

In a very much grander and firmer style do we find the same subject treated in *Othello*.

Othello is, in the popular conception, simply the tragedy of jealousy, as *Macbeth* is simply the tragedy of ambition. Naïve readers and critics fancy in their innocence that Shakespeare, at a certain period of his life, determined to study one or two interesting and dangerous passions, and to put us on our guard against them. Following out this intention, he wrote a play on ambition and its dangers, and another of the same kind on jealousy and all the evils that attend it. But that is not how things happen in the inner life of a creative spirit. A poet does not write exercises on a given subject. His activity is not the result of determination or choice. A nerve in him is touched, vibrates, and reacts.

What Shakespeare here attempts to realise is neither jealousy nor credulity, but simply and solely the tragedy of life; whence does it arise? what are its causes? what its laws?

He was deeply impressed with the power and significance of evil. *Othello* is much less a study of jealousy than a new and more powerful study of wickedness in its might. The umbilical cord that connects the master with his work leads, not to the character of Othello, but to that of Iago.

Simple-minded critics have been of opinion that Shakespeare

constructed Iago on the lines of the historic Richard III.—that is to say, found him in literature, in the pages of a chronicler.

Believe me, Shakespeare met Iago in his own life, saw portions and aspects of him on every hand throughout his manhood, encountered him piecemeal, as it were, on his daily path, till one fine day, when he thoroughly felt and understood what malignant cleverness and baseness can effect, he melted down all these fragments, and out of them cast this figure.

Iago—there is more of the grand manner in this figure than in the whole of *Macbeth*. Iago—there is more depth, more penetrating knowledge of human nature in this one character than in the whole of *Macbeth*. Iago is the very embodiment of the grand manner.

He is not the principle of evil, not an old-fashioned, stupid devil; nor a Miltonic devil, who loves independence and has invented firearms; nor a Goethe's Mephistopheles, who talks cynicism, makes himself indispensable, and is generally in the right. Neither has he the magnificently foolhardy wickedness of a Cæsar Borgia, who lives his life in open defiance and reckless atrocity.

Iago has no other aim than his own advantage. It is the circumstance that not he, but Cassio, has been appointed second in command to Othello, which first sets his craft to work on subtle combinations. He coveted this post, and he will stick at nothing in order to win it. In the meantime, he takes advantage of every opportunity of profit that offers itself; he does not hesitate to fool Roderigo out of his money and his jewels. He is always masked in falsehood and hypocrisy; and the mask he has chosen is the most impenetrable one, that of rough outspokenness, the straightforward, honest bluntness of the soldier who does not care what others think or say of him. He never flatters Othello or Desdemona, or even Roderigo. He is the free-spoken, honest friend.

He does not seek his own advantage without side-glances at others. He is mischievousness personified. He does evil for the pleasure of hurting, and takes active delight in the adversity and anguish of others. He is that eternal envy which merit or success in others never fails to irritate—not the petty envy which is content with coveting another's honours or possessions, or with holding itself more deserving of another's good fortune.

No; he is an ideal personification. He is blear-eyed rancour itself, figuring as a great power—nay, as *the* motive force—in human life. He embodies the detestation for others' excellences which shows itself in obstinate disbelief, suspicion, or contempt; the instinct of hatred for all that is open, beautiful, bright, good, and great.

Shakespeare not only knew that such wickedness exists; he seized it and set his stamp on it, to his eternal honour as a psychologist.

Every one has heard it said that this tragedy is magnificent in so far as the true and beautiful characters of Othello and Desdemona are concerned; but Iago—who knows him?—what motive underlies his conduct?—what can explain such wickedness? If only he had even been frankly in love with Desdemona and therefore hated Othello, or had had some other incentive of a like nature!

Yes, if he had been the ordinary amorous villain and slanderer, everything would undoubtedly have been much simpler; but, at the same time, everything would have sunk into banality, and Shakespeare would here have been unequal to himself.

No, no! precisely in this lack of apparent motive lies the profundity and greatness of the thing. Shakespeare understood this. Iago in his monologues is incessantly giving himself reasons for his hatred. Elsewhere, in reading Shakespeare's monologues, we learn what the person really is; he reveals himself directly to us; even a villain like Richard III. is quite honest in his monologues. Not so Iago. This demi-devil is always trying to give himself reason for his malignity, is always half fooling himself by dwelling on half motives, in which he partly believes, but disbelieves in the main. Coleridge has aptly designated this action of his mind: "The motive-hunting of a motiveless malignity." Again and again he expounds to himself that he believes Othello has been too familiar with his wife, and that he will avenge the dishonour. He now and then adds, to account for his hatred of Cassio, that he suspects him too of tampering with Emilia.[1] He even thinks it worth while to allege, as a

[1] He says (i. 3):—

"I hate the Moor,
And it is thought abroad, that 'twixt my sheets
'Has done my office. I know not if 't be true;

secondary motive, that he himself is enamoured of Desdemona. His words are (ii. 1):—

> "Now, I do love her too;
> Not out of absolute lust, (though, peradventure,
> I stand accountant for as great a sin,)
> But partly led to diet my revenge,
> For that I do suspect the lusty Moor
> Hath leap'd into my seat."

These are half-sincere attempts at self-understanding, sophistical self-justifications. Yellow-green, venomous envy has always a motive in its own eyes, and tries to make its malignity towards the better man pass muster as a desire for righteous vengeance. But Iago, who, a few lines before, has himself said of Othello that he is "of a constant, loving, noble nature," is a thousand times too clever to believe that he has been wronged by him. The Moor is, to his eyes, transparent as glass.

An ordinary human capacity for love or hatred springing from a definite cause would degrade and detract from Iago's supremacy in evil. In the end, he is sentenced to torture, because he will not vouchsafe a word of explanation or enlightenment. Hard and, in his way, proud as he is, he will certainly keep his lips tightly closed under the torture; but even if he wanted to speak, it would not be in his power to give any real explanation. He has slowly, steadily poisoned Othello's nature. We watch the working of the venom on the simple-hearted man, and we see how the very success of the poisoning process brutalises and intoxicates Iago more and more. But to ask whence the poison came into Iago's soul would be a foolish question, and one to which he himself could give no answer. The serpent is poisonous by nature; it gives forth poison as the silkworm does its thread and the violet its fragrance.

Towards the close of the tragedy (iv. 2) there occurs one of its profoundest passages, which shows us how Shakespeare must have dwelt upon and studied the potency of evil during

> But I for mere suspicion in that kind
> Will do as if for surety."

He adds (ii. 7):—

> "I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip,
> Abuse him to the Moor in the rank garb,
> For I fear Cassio with my night-cap too."

these years. After Emilia has witnessed the breaking out of Othello's mad rage against Desdemona, she says—

> "*Emil.* I will be hang'd, if some eternal villain,
> Some busy and insinuating rogue,
> Some cogging, cozening slave, to get some office,
> Have not devis'd this slander; I'll be hang'd else.
> *Iago.* Fie! there is no such man: it is impossible.
> *Des.* If any such there be, Heaven pardon him!
> *Emil.* A halter pardon him, and hell gnaw his bones!"

All three characters stand out in clear relief in these short speeches. But Iago's is the most significant. His "Fie! there is no such man; it is impossible," expresses the thought under shelter of which he has lived and is living: other people do not believe that such a being exists.

Here we meet once more in Shakespeare the astonishment of Hamlet at the paradox of evil, and once more, too, the indirect appeal to the reader which formed the burden, as it were, of *Hamlet* and *Measure for Measure*, the now thrice-repeated, "Say not, think not, that this is impossible!" The belief in the impossibility of utter turpitude is the very condition of existence of such a king as Claudius, such a magistrate as Angelo, such an officer as Iago. Hence Shakespeare's "Verily I say unto you, this highest degree of wickedness is possible in the world."

It is one of the two factors in life's tragedy. Stupidity is the other. On these two foundations rests the great mass of all this world's misery.

XXIV

OTHELLO—THE THEME AND ITS TREATMENT—A MONOGRAPH IN THE GREAT STYLE

A MANUSCRIPT preserved in the Record Office, of doubtful date, but probably copied from an authentic document, contains the following entry:—

The plaiers By the Kings Ma[ties] plaiers	1605 Hallamas Day being the first of November A play in the Banketing house att withall called the Moore of Venis.	The Poets wch mayd the plaies Shaxberd.

Thus *Othello* was probably produced in the autumn of 1605. After this we have no proof of its performance till four and a half years later, when we hear of it again in the journal of Prince Ludwig Friedrich of Würtemberg, written by his secretary, Hans Wurmsser. The entry for the 30th of April 1610 runs thus:—

"Lundi, 30. S. E[minence] alla au Globe, lieu ordinaire ou l'on Joue les Commedies, y fut representé l'histoire du More de Venise."

In face of these data it matters nothing that there should appear in *Othello*, as we have it, a line that must have been written in or after 1611. The tragedy was printed for the first time in a quarto edition in 1622, for the second time in the Folio of 1623. The Folio text contains an additional 160 lines (proving that another manuscript has been made use of), and all oaths and mentions of the name of God are omitted. It is not only possible, but certain, that this line must have been a late interpolation. Its entire discordance with its position in the play shows this clearly enough, and seems to me to render it doubtful whether it is by Shakespeare at all.

In the scene where Othello bids Desdemona give him her hand, and loses himself in reflections upon it (iii. 4), he makes this speech :—

> "A liberal hand : the hearts of old gave hands ;
> But our new heraldry is hands, not hearts."

Here there is an allusion, which could only be understood by contemporaries, to the title of Baronet, created and sold by James, which gave its possessors the right of bearing in their coat-of-arms a bloody hand on a field argent. Most naturally Desdemona replies to this irrelevant remark : "I cannot speak of this."

In Cinthio's Italian collection of tales, where he had found the plot of *Measure for Measure*, Shakespeare at the same time (in Decade 3, Novella 7) came upon the material for *Othello*. The story in the *Hecatommitti* runs as follows : A young Venetian lady named Disdemona falls in love with a Moor, a military commander—"not from feminine desire," but because of his great qualities—and marries him in spite of the opposition of her relatives. They live in Venice in complete happiness ; "no word ever passed between them that was not loving." When the Moor is ordered to Cyprus to take command there, his one anxiety is about his wife ; he is equally unwilling to expose her to the dangers of the sea voyage and to leave her alone. She settles the question by declaring that she will rather follow him anywhere, into any danger, than live in safety apart from him ; whereupon he rapturously kisses her, with the ejaculation : "May God long preserve you so loving, my dearest wife !" Thus the perfect initial harmony between the pair which Shakespeare depicts is suggested by his original.

The Ensign undermines their happiness. He is described as remarkably handsome, but "as wicked by nature as any man that ever lived in the world." He was dear to the Moor, "who had no idea of his baseness." For although he was an arrant coward, he managed by means of proud and blusterous talk, aided by his fine appearance, so to conceal his cowardice that he passed for a Hector or Achilles. His wife, whom he had taken with him to Cyprus, was a fair and virtuous young woman, much beloved by Disdemona, who spent the greater part of the day in her company. The Lieutenant (*il capo di squadra*) came

much to the Moor's house, and often supped with him and his wife.

The wicked Ensign is passionately in love with Disdemona, but all his attempts to win her love are entirely unsuccessful, as she has not a thought for any one but the Moor. The Ensign, however, imagines that the reason for her rejection of him must be that she is in love with the Lieutenant, and therefore determines to rid himself of this rival, while his love for Disdemona is changed into the bitterest hatred. From this time forward, his object is not only to bring about the death of the Lieutenant, but to prevent the Moor from finding the pleasure in Disdemona's love which is denied to himself. He goes to work as in the drama, though of course with some differences of detail. In the novel, for example, the Ensign steals Disdemona's handkerchief whilst she is visiting his wife, and playing with their little girl. Disdemona's death-scene is more horrible in the tale than in the tragedy. By command of the Moor, the Ensign hides himself in a room adjoining Othello's and Disdemona's bedchamber. He makes a noise, and Disdemona rises to see what it is; whereupon the Ensign gives her a violent blow on the head with a stocking filled with sand. She calls to her husband for help, but he answers by accusing her of infidelity; she in vain protests her innocence, and dies at the third blow of the stocking. The murder is concealed, but the Moor now begins to hate his Ensign, and dismisses him. The Ensign is so exasperated by this, that he lets the Lieutenant know who is responsible for the night assault that has just been made upon him. The Lieutenant accuses the Moor before the council, and Othello is put to torture. He refuses to confess, and is sent into banishment. The wicked Ensign, who has brought a false accusation of murder against one of his comrades, is himself in turn accused by the innocent man, and subjected to torture until he dies.

To the characters in the novel, Shakespeare has added two, Brabantio and Roderigo. Only one of the names he uses is found in the original. Disdemona, which seems made to designate the victim of an evil destiny, Shakespeare has changed into the sweeter-sounding Desdemona. The other names are of Shakespeare's own choosing. Most of them are Italian (Othello itself is a Venetian noble name of the sixteenth century); others, such as Iago and Roderigo, are Spanish.

With his customary adherence to his original, Shakespeare, like Cinthio, calls his protagonist a Moor; but it is quite unreasonable to suppose from this that he thought of him as a negro. It was, of course, inconceivable that a negro should attain the rank of general and admiral in the service of the Venetian Republic; and Iago's mention of Mauritania as the country to which Othello intends to retire, shows plainly enough that the "Moor" ought to be represented as an Arab. It is no argument against this that men who hate and envy him apply to him epithets that would befit a negro. Thus Roderigo in the first scene of the play calls him "thick-lips," and Iago, speaking to Brabantio, calls him "an old black ram." But a little later Iago compares him with "a Barbary horse"—that is to say, an Arab from North Africa. It is always animosity and hate that exaggerate the darkness of his hue, as when Brabantio talks of his "sooty bosom." That Othello calls himself *black* only means that he is dark. In this very play Iago says of dark women:

> "If she be *black*, and thereto have a wit,
> She'll find a white that shall her *blackness* fit."

And we have seen how, in the Sonnets and in *Love's Labour's Lost*, "black" is constantly employed in the sense of dark-complexioned. As a Moor, Othello has a complexion sufficiently swarthy to form a striking contrast to the white and even blonde Desdemona, and there is also a sufficiently marked race-contrast between him, as a Semite, and the Aryan girl. It is quite conceivable, too, that a Christianised Moor should reach a high position in the army and fleet of the Republic.

It ought further to be noted that the whole tradition of the Venetian "Moor" has possibly arisen from a confusion of words. Rawdon Browne, in 1875, suggested the theory that Giraldi had founded his tale on the simple misunderstanding of a name. In the history of Venice we read of an eminent patrician, Christoforo Moro by name, who in 1498 was Podestà of Ravenna, and afterwards held similar office in Faenza, Ferrara, and the Romagna; then became Governor of Cyprus; in 1508 commanded fourteen ships; and later still was Proveditore of the army. When this man was returning from Cyprus to Venice in 1508, his wife (the third), who is said to have belonged to the family of Barbarigo (note the resemblance to Brabantio), died on the voyage, and

there seems to have been some mystery connected with her death. In 1515 he took as his fourth wife a young girl, who is said to have been nicknamed *Demonio bianco*—the white demon. From this the name Desdemona may have been derived, in the same way as Moor from Moro.

The additions which Shakespeare made to the story as he found it in Cinthio—Desdemona's abduction, the hurried and secret marriage, the accusation, to us so strange, but in those days so natural and common, of the girl's heart having been won by witchcraft—these all occur in the history of Venetian families of the period.

Be this as it may, when Shakespeare proceeds to the treatment of the subject, he arranges all the conditions and circumstances, so that they present the most favourable field for Iago's operations, and he so fashions Othello as to render him more susceptible than any other man would be to the poison which Iago (like Lucianus in the play-scene in *Hamlet*) drops into his ear. Then he lets us trace the growth of the passion from its first germ, through every stage of its development, until it blasts and shatters the victim's whole character.

Othello's is an inartificial soul, a simple, straightforward, soldier nature. He has no worldly wisdom, for he has lived his whole life in camps:

> "And little of this great world can I speak,
> More than pertains to feats of broil and battle."

A good and true man himself, he believes in goodness in others, especially in those who make a show of outspokenness, bluffness, undaunted determination to blame where blame is due—like Iago, who characteristically says of himself to Desdemona:

> "For I am nothing if not critical."

And Othello not only believes in Iago's honesty, but is inclined to take him for his guide, as being far superior to himself in knowledge of men and of the world.

Again, Othello belongs to the noble natures that are never preoccupied with the thought of their own worth. He is devoid of vanity. He has never said to himself that such exploits, such heroic deeds, as have won him his renown, must make a far deeper impression on the fancy of a young girl of Desdemona's

disposition than the smooth face and pleasant manners of a Cassio. He is so little impressed with the idea of his greatness that it almost at once appears quite natural to him that he should be scorned.

Othello is the man of despised race, with the fiery African temperament. In comparison with Desdemona he is old—more of an age with her father than with herself. He tells himself that he has neither youth nor good looks to keep her love with, not even affinity of race to build upon. Iago exasperates Brabantio by crying:

> "Even now, now, very now, an old black ram
> Is tupping your white ewe."

Othello's race has a reputation for low sensuality, therefore Roderigo can inflame the rage of Desdemona's father by such expressions as "gross clasps of a lascivious Moor."

That she should feel attracted by him must have seemed to outsiders like madness or the effect of sorcery. For, far from being of an inviting, forward, or coquettish nature, Desdemona is represented as more than ordinarily reserved and modest. Her father calls her (i. 3):

> "A maiden never bold;
> Of spirit so still and quiet, that her motion
> Blush'd at herself."

She has been brought up as a tenderly-nurtured patrician child in rich, happy Venice. The gilded youth of the city have fluttered around her daily, but she has shown favour to none of them. Therefore, her father says (i. 2):

> "For I'll refer me to all things of sense,
> If she in chains of magic were not bound,
> Whether a maid so tender, fair, and happy,
> So opposite to marriage, that she shunn'd
> The wealthy curled darlings of our nation,
> Would ever have, to incur a general mock,
> Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom
> Of such a thing as thou."

Shakespeare, who knew everything about Italy, knew that the Venetian youth of that period had their hair curled, and wore a lock down on the forehead.

Othello, on his part, at once feels himself strongly drawn to Desdemona. And it is not merely the fair, delicate girl in her that allures him. Had he not loved her, her only, with burning passion, he would never have married her; for he has the fear of marriage that belongs to his wild, freedom-loving nature, and he in no wise considers himself honoured and exalted by this connection with a patrician family. He is descended from the princes of his country (i. 2):

> "I fetch my life and being
> From men of royal siege;"

And he has shrunk from binding himself:

> "But that I love the gentle Desdemona,
> I would not my unhoused free condition
> Put into circumscription and confine
> For the sea's worth."

Truly there is magic in it—not the gross and common sorcery which the others believe in and suppose to have been employed—not the "foul charms" and "drugs or minerals that weaken motion," to which her father alludes—but the sweet, alluring magic by which a man and a woman are mysteriously enchained.

Othello's speech of self-vindication in the council chamber, in which he explains to the Duke how he came to win Desdemona's sympathy and tenderness, has been universally admired.

Having gained her father's favour, he was often asked by him to tell the story of his life, of its dangers and adventures. He told of sufferings and hardships, of hairbreadth 'scapes from death, of imprisonment by cruel enemies, of far-off strange countries he had journeyed through. (The fantastic catalogue, it may be noted, is taken from the fabulous books of travel of the day.) Desdemona loved to listen, but was often called away by household cares, always returning when these were despatched to follow his story with a greedy ear. He "found means" to draw from her a request to tell her his history, not in fragments, but entire. He consented, and often her eyes were filled with tears when she heard of the distresses of his youth. With innocent candour she bade him at last, if ever he had a friend that loved her, to teach him how to tell her Othello's story—"and that would woo her."

In other words, she is not won through the eye, though we must take Othello to have been a stately figure, but through the ear—"I saw Othello's visage in his mind." She becomes his through her sympathy with him in all he has suffered and achieved:—

> "She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd,
> And I lov'd her that she did pity them.
> This only is the witchcraft I have us'd.
> *Duke.* I think, this tale would win my daughter too."

Such, then, is the relation in which the poet has decreed that these two shall stand to each other. This is no love between two of the same age and the same race, whom only family enmity keeps apart, as in *Romeo and Juliet.* Still less is it a union of hearts like that of Brutus and Portia, where the perfect harmony is the result of tenderest friendship in combination with closest kinship, added to the fact that the wife's father is her husband's hero and ideal. No, in direct contrast to this last, it is a union which rests on the attraction of opposites, and which has everything against it—difference of race, difference of age, and the strange, exotic aspect of the man, with the lack of self-confidence which it awakens in him.

Iago expounds to Roderigo how impossible it is that this alliance should last. Desdemona fell in love with the Moor because he bragged to her and told her fantastical lies; does any one believe that love can be kept alive by prating? To inflame the blood anew, "sympathy in years, manners, and beauties" is required, "all which the Moor is defective in."

The Moor himself is at first troubled by none of these reflections. And why not? Because Othello is not jealous.

This sounds paradoxical, yet it is the plain truth. Othello not jealous! It is as though one were to say water is not wet or fire does not burn. But Othello's is no jealous nature; jealous men and women think very differently and act very differently. He is unsuspicious, confiding, and in so far stupid—there lies the misfortune; but jealous, in the proper sense of the word, he is not. When Iago is preparing to insinuate his calumnies of Desdemona, he begins hypocritically (iii. 3):

> "O beware, my lord, of jealousy;
> It is the green-eyed monster. . . ."

Othello answers:

"'Tis not to make me jealous,
To say—my wife is fair, feeds well, loves company,
Is free of speech, sings, plays, and dances well;
Where virtue is, these are more virtuous:
Nor from mine own weak merits will I draw
The smallest fear, or doubt of her revolt;
For she had eyes, and chose me."

Thus not even his exceptional position causes him any uneasiness, so long as things take their natural course. But there is no escaping the steady pursuit of which he, all unwitting, is the object. He becomes as suspicious towards Desdemona as he is credulous towards Iago—"Brave Iago!" "Honest Iago!" Brabantio's malison recurs to his mind—"She has deceived her father, and may thee;" and close on it crowd Iago's reasons:

"Haply, for I am black,
And have not those soft parts of conversation
That chamberers have; or, for I am declin'd
Into the vale of years;—yet that's not much."

And the torment seizes him of feeling that one human being is a sealed book to the other—that it is impossible to control passion and appetite in a woman, though the law may have given her into one's hand—until at last he feels as if he were stretched on the rack, and Iago can exult in the thought that not all the drowsy syrups of the world can procure him the untroubled sleep of yesterday. Then follows the mournful farewell to all his previous life, and on this sadness once more follows doubt, and despair at the doubt:—

"I think my wife be honest and think she is not;
I think that thou art just and think thou art not,"

—until all his thoughts are centred in the craving for revenge and blood.

Not naturally jealous, he has become so through the working of the base but devilishly subtle slander which he is too simple to penetrate and spurn.

In these masterly scenes (the third and fourth of the third act) there are more reminiscences of other poets than we find elsewhere in Shakespeare within such narrow compass; and they

are of interest as showing us what he knew, and what his mind was dwelling upon in those days.

In Berni's *Orlando Innamorato* (Canto 51, Stanza 1), we come upon Iago's declaration :—

> "Who steals my purse, steals trash ; 'tis something, nothing ;
> 'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands ;
> But he that filches from me my good name,
> Robs me of that which not enriches him,
> And makes me poor indeed."

The passage in Berni runs thus :—

> "Chi ruba un corno, un cavallo, un anello,
> E simil cose, ha qualche discrezione,
> E potrebbe chiamarsi ladroncello ;
> Ma quel che ruba la riputazione
> E de l'altrui fatiche si fa bello
> Si può chiamare assassino e ladrone."

A reminiscence also lies hidden in Othello's exquisite farewell to a soldier's life :—

> "O now for ever
> Farewell the tranquil mind ! farewell content !
> Farewell the plumed troops, and the big wars,
> That make ambition virtue ! O, farewell !
> Farewell the neighing steed, and the shrill trump,
> The spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife,
> The royal banner, and all quality,
> Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war !"

It is clear that there must have lurked in Shakespeare's mind a reminiscence of an apostrophe contained in the old play, *A Pleasant Comedie called Common Conditions*, which he must, doubtless, have seen as a youth in Stratford. In it the hero says :—

> "But farewell now, my coursers brave, attrapped to the ground.
> Farewell, adieu, all pleasures eke, with comely hawk and hound !
> Farewell, ye nobles all ! Farewell, each martial knight !
> Farewell, ye famous ladies all, in whom I did delight !"

The study of Ariosto in Italian has also left its trace. It is where Othello, talking of the handkerchief, says :—

"A sibyl, that had number'd in the world
The sun to course two hundred compasses,
In her prophetic fury sew'd the work."

In *Orlando Furioso* (Canto 46, Stanza 80) we read:—

"Una donzella della terra d'Ilia,
Ch'avea *il furor profetico* congiunto
Con studio di gran tempo, e con vigilia
Lo fece di sua man di tutto punto."

The agreement here cannot possibly be accidental. And what makes it still more certain that Shakespeare had the Italian text before him is that the words *prophetic fury*, which are the same in *Othello* as in the Italian, are not to be found in Harington's English translation, the only one then in existence. He must thus, whilst writing *Othello*, have been interested in Orlando, and had Berni's and Ariosto's poems lying on his table.

Desdemona's innocent simplicity in these scenes rivals the boundless and actually tragic simplicity of Othello. In the first place, she is convinced that the Moor, whom she sees wrought up to the verge of madness, cannot possibly suspect her, and is unassailable by jealousy.

"*Emilia.* Is he not jealous?
Desdemona. Who? he! I think the sun where he was born
Drew all such humours from him."

So she acts with foolish indiscretion, continuing to tease Othello about Cassio's reinstatement, although she ought to feel that it is her harping on this topic that enrages him.

Then follow Iago's still more monstrous lies: the confession he pretends to have heard Cassio make in his sleep; the story that she has presented the precious handkerchief to Cassio; and the pretence that Desdemona is the subject of the words which Othello, from his hiding-place, hears Cassio let fall as to his relations with the courtesan, Bianca. To hear his wife, his beloved, thus derided, stings the Moor to frenzy.

It is such a consistently sustained imposture that there is, perhaps, only one at all comparable to it in history—the intrigue of the diamond necklace, in which Cardinal de Rohan was as utterly duped and ruined as Othello is here.

And now Othello has reached the stage at which he can no longer think coherently, or speak except in ejaculations (iv. 1):—

"*Iago.* Lie with her.

"*Othello.* With her?

"*Iago.* With her, on her, what you will.

"*Othello.* Lie with her! lie on her!—We say, lie on her when they belie her. Lie with her! that's fulsome.—Handkerchief,—confessions,—handkerchief.—To confess, and be hanged for his labour.—First, to be hanged, and then to confess. . . . It is not words, that shakes me thus.—Pish!—Noses, ears, and lips.—Is it possible?—Confess!—Handkerchief!—O devil!"

With the mind's eye he sees them in each other's arms.[1] He is seized with an epileptic fit and falls.

This is not a representation of spontaneous but of artificially induced jealousy; in other words, of credulity poisoned by malignity. Hence the moral which Shakespeare, through the mouth of Iago, bids the audience take home with them:

> "Thus credulous fools are caught;
> And many worthy and chaste dames even thus,
> All guiltless, meet reproach."

It is not Othello's jealousy, but his credulity that is the prime cause of the disaster; and even so must Desdemona's noble simplicity bear its share in the blame. Between them they render possible the complete success of a man like Iago.

When Othello bursts into tears before Desdemona's eyes, without her suspecting the reason (iv. 2), he says most touchingly that he could have borne affliction and shame, poverty and captivity—could even have endured to be made the butt of mockery

[1] The development of this passage exactly corresponds to Spinoza's classic definition of jealousy, written seventy years later. See *Ethices, Pars III., Propositio XXXV., Scholium:* "Præterea hoc odium erga rem amatam majus erit pro ratione Lætitiæ, qua Zelotypus ex reciproco rei amatæ Amore solebat affici, et etiam pro ratione affectus, quo erga illum, quem sibi rem amatam jungere imaginatur, affectus erat. Nam si eum oderat, eo ipso rem amatam odio habebit, quia ipsam id, quod ipse odio habet, Lætitia afficere imaginatur; et etiam ex eo, quod rei amatæ imaginem imagini ejus, quem odit, jungere cogitur, quæ ratio plerumque locum habet in Amore erga fœminam; qui enim imaginatur mulierem, quam amat, alteri sese prostituere, non solum ex eo, quod ipsius appetitus coercetur, contristabitur, sed etiam quia rei amatæ maginem pudendis et excrementis alterius jungere cogitur, eandem aversatur."

and scorn—but that he cannot bear to see her whom he worshipped the object of his own contempt. He does not suffer most from jealousy, but from seeing "the fountain from the which his current runs" a dried-up swamp, or "a cistern for foul toads to knot and gender in." This is pure, deep sorrow at seeing his idol sullied, not mean frenzy at the idol's preferring another worshipper.

And with that grace which is an attribute of perfect strength, Shakespeare has introduced as a contrast, directly before the terrible catastrophe, Desdemona's delicate little ditty of the willow-tree—of the maiden who weeps because her lover is untrue to her, but who loves him none the less. Desdemona is deeply touching when she pleads with her cruel lord for but a few moments' respite, but she is great in the instant of death, when she expires with the sublime lie, the one lie of her life, upon her lips, designed to shield her murderer from his punishment.

Ophelia, Desdemona, Cordelia—what a trefoil! Each has her characteristic features, but they resemble one another like sisters; they all present the type which Shakespeare at this point loves and most affects. Had they a model? Had they perhaps one and the same model? Had he about this time encountered a young and charming woman, living, as it were, under a cloud of sorrow, injustice, misunderstanding, who was all heart and tenderness, without any claims to intellect or wit? We may suspect this, but we know nothing of it.

The figure of Desdemona is one of the most charming Shakespeare has drawn. She is more womanly than other women, as the noble Othello is more manly than other men. So that after all there is a very good reason for the attraction between them; the most womanly of women feels herself drawn to the manliest of men.

The subordinate figures are worked out with hardly less skill than the principal characters of the tragedy. Emilia especially is inimitable—good-hearted, honest, and not exactly light, but still sufficiently the daughter of Eve to be unable to understand Desdemona's naïve and innocent chastity.

At the end of Act iv. (in the bedroom scene) Desdemona asks Emilia if she believes that there really are women who do what Othello accuses her of. Emilia answers in the affirmative. Then her mistress asks again: "Would'st thou do such a deed

for all the world?" and receives the jesting answer, "The world is a huge thing; 'tis a great price for a small vice:

"Marry, I would not do such a thing for a joint-ring, nor for measures of lawn, nor for gowns, petticoats, nor caps, nor any petty exhibition; but, for the whole world! . . . Why, the wrong is but a wrong i' the world; and, having the world for your labour, 'tis a wrong in your own world, and you might quickly make it right."

In passages like this a mildly playful note is struck in the very midst of the horror. And according to his habit and the custom of the times, Shakespeare also introduces, by means of the Clown, one or two deliberately comic passages; but the Clown's merriment is subdued, as Shakespeare's merriment at this period always is.

The composition of *Othello* is closely akin to that of *Macbeth*. In these two tragedies alone there are no episodes; the action moves onward uninterrupted and undissipated. But the beautiful proportion of all its parts and articulations gives *Othello* the advantage over the mutilated *Macbeth* which we possess. Here the crescendo of the tragedy is executed with absolute *maestria;* the passion rises with a positively musical effect; Iago's devilish plan is realised step by step with consummate certainty; all details are knit together into one firm and well-nigh inextricable knot; and the carelessness with which Shakespeare has treated the necessary lapse of time between the different stages of the action, has, by compressing the events of months and years into a few days, heightened the effect of strict and firm cohesion which the play produces.

There are some inaccuracies in the text as we have it. At the close of the play there is a passage, to account for which we must almost assume that part of a vitiated text, adapted to some special performance, has been interpolated. In the full rush of the catastrophe, when only Othello's last speeches are wanting, Lodovico volunteers some information as to what has happened, which is not only superfluous for the spectator, but quite out of the general style and tone of the play:

"*Lodovico.* Sir, you shall understand what hath befall'n,
Which, as I think, you know not. Here is a letter,

Found in the pocket of the slain Roderigo;
And here another: the one of them imports
The death of Cassio to be undertook
By Roderigo.
Othello. O villain!
Cassio. Most heathenish and most gross!
Lod. Now, here's another discontented paper,
Found in his pocket too," &c., &c.

These speeches, and yet a third, are all aimed at making Othello understand how shamefully he has been deceived; but they are nerveless and feeble and detract from the effect of the scene. This passage ought to be expunged; it is not Shakespeare's, and it forms a little stain on his flawless work of art.

For flawless it is. I not only find several of Shakespeare's greatest qualities united in this work, but I see hardly a fault in it.

It is the only one of Shakespeare's tragedies which does not treat of national events, but is a family tragedy,—what was later known as *tragédie domestique* or *bourgeoise*. But the treatment is anything but bourgeois; the style is of the very grandest. One gets the best idea of the distance between it and the *tragédie bourgeoise* of later times on comparing with it Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*, which is in many ways an imitation of *Othello*.

We see here a great man who is at the same time a great child; a noble though impetuous nature, as unsuspicious as it is unworldly. We see a young woman, all gentleness and nobility of heart, who lives only for him she has chosen, and who dies with solicitude for her murderer on her lips. And we see these two elect natures ruined by the simplicity which makes them an easy prey to wickedness.

A great work *Othello* undoubtedly is, but it is a monograph. It lacks the breadth which Shakespeare's plays as a rule possess. It is a sharply limited study of a single and very special form of passion, the growth of suspicion in the mind of a lover with African blood and temperament—a great example of the power of wickedness over unsuspecting nobility. Taken all in all, this is a restricted subject, which becomes monumental only by the grandeur of its treatment.

No other drama of Shakespeare's had been so much of a

monograph. He assuredly felt this, and with the impulse of the great artist to make his new work a complement and contrast to the immediately preceding one, he now sought and found the subject for that one of his tragedies which is least of all a monograph, which grew into nothing less than the universal tragedy—all the great woes of human life concentrated in one mighty symbol.

He turned from *Othello* to *Lear.*

XXV

KING LEAR—THE FEELING UNDERLYING IT—THE CHRONICLE—SIDNEY'S ARCADIA AND THE OLD PLAY

In *King Lear*, Shakespeare's vision sounded the abyss of horror to its very depths, and his spirit showed neither fear, nor giddiness, nor faintness at the sight.

On the threshold of this work, a feeling of awe comes over one, as on the threshold of the Sistine Chapel, with its ceiling-frescoes by Michael Angelo—only that the suffering here is far more intense, the wail wilder, the harmonies of beauty more definitely shattered by the discords of despair.

Othello was a noble piece of chamber-music—simple and easily apprehended, powerfully affecting though it be. This work, on the other hand, is the symphony of an enormous orchestra—all earth's instruments sound in it, and every instrument has many stops.

King Lear is the greatest task Shakespeare ever set himself, the most extensive and the most imposing—all the suffering and horror that can arise from the relation between a father and his children, expressed in five acts of moderate length.

No modern mind has dared to face such a subject; nor could any one have grappled with it. Shakespeare did so without even a trace of effort, by virtue of the overpowering mastery which he now, in the meridian of his genius, had attained over the whole of human life. He handles his theme with the easy vigour that belongs to spiritual health, though we have here scene upon scene of such intense pathos that we seem to hear the sobs of suffering humanity accompanying the action, much as one hears by the sea-shore the steady plash and sob of the waves.

Under what conditions did Shakespeare take hold of this subject? The drama tells plainly enough. He stood at the turning-point of human life; he had lived about forty-two years;

ten years of life still lay before him, but of these certainly not more than seven were intellectually productive. He now brought that which makes life worse than death face to face with that which makes life worth living—the very breath of our lungs and Cordelia-like solace of our suffering—and swept them both forward to a catastrophe that appals us like the ruin of a world.

In what frame of mind did Shakespeare set himself to this work? What was seething in his brain, what was moaning in his breast, at the time he chanced upon this subject? The drama tells plainly enough. Of all the different forms of cruelty, coarseness, and baseness with which life had brought him into contact, of all the vices and infamies that embitter the existence of the nobler sort of men, one vice now seemed to him the worst—stood out before him as the most abominable and revolting of all—one of which he himself, no doubt, had again and again been the victim—to wit, ingratitude. He saw no baseness more widespread or more indulgently regarded.

Who can doubt that he, immoderately enriched by nature, he whose very existence was, like that of Shelley's cloud, a constant giving, an eternal beneficence, a perpetual bringing of "fresh showers to the thirsting flowers"—who can doubt that such a giver on the grandest scale must again and again have been rewarded with the blackest ingratitude? We see, for instance, how *Hamlet*, so far his greatest work, was received with instant attack, with what Swinburne has aptly called "the jeers, howls, hoots and hisses of which a careful ear may catch some far, faint echo even yet—the fearful and furtive yelp from beneath of the masked and writhing poeticule."[1] His life passed in the theatre. We can very well guess, where we do not know, how comrades to whom he gave example and assistance; stage poets, who envied while they admired him; actors whom he trained and who found in him a spiritual father; the older men whom he aided, the young men whom he befriended—how all these would now fall away from him, now fall upon him; and each new instance of ingratitude was a shock to his spiritual life. For years he kept silence, suppressed his indignation, locked it up in his own breast. But he hated and despised ingratitude above all vices, because it at once impoverished and belittled his soul.

[1] Swinburne: *A Study of Shakespeare*, p. 164.

His was certainly not one of those artist natures that are free-handed with money when they have it, and confer benefits with good-natured carelessness. He was a competent, energetic business man, who spared and saved in order to gain an independence and restore the fallen fortunes of his family. But none the less he was evidently a good comrade in practical, a benefactor in intellectual, life. And he felt that ingratitude impoverished and degraded him, by making it hard for him to be helpful again, and to give forth with both hands out of the royal treasure of his nature, when he had been disappointed and deceived so often, even by those for whom he had done most and in whom he believed most. He felt that if there were any baseness which could drive its victim to despair, to madness, it was the vice of black ingratitude.

In such a frame of mind he finds, one day, when he is as usual turning over the leaves of his Holinshed, the story of King Lear, the great giver. In the same temper he reads the old play on the subject, dating from 1593–4, and entitled *Chronicle History of King Leir*. Here he found what he needed, the half-worked clay out of which he could model figures and groups. Here, in this superficially dramatised chronicle of appalling ingratitude, was the very theme for him to develop. So he took it to his heart and brooded over it till it quickened and came to life.

We can determine without difficulty the period during which Shakespeare was working at *King Lear*. Were it not clear from other reasons that the play cannot have been written before 1603, we should know it from the fact that in this year was published Harsnet's *Declaration of Popish Impostures*, from which he took the names of some of the fiends mentioned by Edgar (iii. 4). And it cannot have been produced later than 1606, for on the 26th December of that year it was acted before King James. This we know from its being entered in the Stationers' Register on the 26th of November 1607, with the addition "as yt was played before the kinges maiestie at Whitehall vppon Sainct Stephens night at Christmas last." But we can get still nearer than this to the time of its composition. When Gloucester (i. 2) speaks of "these late eclipses," he is doubtless alluding to the eclipse of the sun in October 1605. And the immediately following remarks about "machinations, hollowness, treachery,

and all ruinous disorders" prevailing at the time, refer in all probability to the great Gunpowder Plot of November 1605.

Thus it was towards the end of 1605 that Shakespeare began to work at *King Lear*.

The story was old and well known. It was told for the first time in Latin by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *Historia Britonum*, for the first time in English by Layamon in his *Brut* about 1205. It came originally from Wales and bears a distinctly Celtic impress, which Shakespeare, with his fine feeling for all national peculiarities, has succeeded in retaining and intensifying.

He found all the main features of the story in Holinshed. According to this authority, Leir, son of Baldud, rules in Britain "at what time Joash reigned as yet in Juda." His three daughters are named Gonorilla, Regan, and Cordeilla. He asks them how great is their love for him, and they answer as in the tragedy. Cordeilla, repudiated and disinherited, marries one of the princes of Gaul. When the two elder daughters have shamefully ill-treated Leir, he flees to Cordeilla. She and her husband raise an army, sail to England, defeat the armies of the two sisters, and reinstate Leir on his throne. He reigns for two more years; then Cordeilla succeeds to the throne—and this happens "in the yeere of the world 3155, before the bylding of Rome 54, Uzia then reigning in Juda and Jeroboam over Israell." She rules the kingdom for five years. Then her husband dies, and her sisters' sons rise in rebellion against her, lay waste a great part of the country, take her prisoner, and keep her strictly guarded. This so enrages Cordeilla, who is of a masculine spirit, that she takes her own life.

The material Shakespeare found in this tradition did not suffice him. The thoughts and imaginings which the story set astir within him led him to seek for a supplement to the action in the tale of Gloucester and his sons, which he took from Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, a book not yet twenty years old. With the story of the great giver, who is recompensed with ingratitude by his wicked daughters after he has banished his good daughter, he entwined the story of the righteous duke, who, deceived by slander, repudiates his good son, and is hurled by the bad one into the depths of misery, until at last his eyes are torn out of his head.

According to Sidney, some princes are overtaken by a storm

in the kingdom of Galacia. They take refuge in a cave, where they find an old blind man and a youth, whom the old man in vain entreats to lead him to the top of a rock, from which he may throw himself down, and thus put an end to his life. The old man had formerly been Prince of Paphlagonia, but the "hard-hearted ungratefulness" of his illegitimate son had deprived him not only of his kingdom but of his eyesight. This bastard had previously had a fatal influence over his father. By his permission the Prince had given orders to his servants to take his legitimate son out into a wood and there kill him. The young man, however, escaped, went into foreign military service, and distinguished himself; but when he heard of the evils that had befallen his father, he hastened back to be a support to his hapless age, and is now heaping coals of fire upon his head. The old man begs the foreign princes to make his story known, that it may bring honour to the pious son,—the only reward he can expect.

The old drama of *King Leir* had kept strictly to Holinshed's chronicle. It is instructive reading for any one who is trying to mete out the compass of Shakespeare's genius. A childish work, in which the rough outlines of the principal action, as we know them from Shakespeare, are superficially reproduced, it compares with Shakespeare's tragedy as the melody of Schiller's "An die Freude," played with one finger, compares with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. And even this comparison does rather too much honour to the old drama, in which the melody is barely suggested.

XXVI

KING LEAR—THE TRAGEDY OF A WORLD-CATASTROPHE

I IMAGINE that Shakespeare must, as a rule, have worked early in the morning. The division of the day at that time would necessitate this. But it can scarcely have been in bright morning hours, scarcely in the daytime, that he conceived *King Lear*. No; it must have been on a night of storm and terror, one of those nights when a man, sitting at his desk at home, thinks of the wretches who are wandering in houseless poverty through the darkness, the blustering wind, and the soaking rain—when the rushing of the storm over the house-tops and its howling in the chimneys sound in his ears like shrieks of agony, the wail of all the misery of earth.

For in *King Lear*, and *King Lear* alone, we feel that what we in our day know by the awkward name of the social problem, in other words, the problem of extreme wretchedness and want, existed already for Shakespeare. On such a night he says with Lear (iii. 4):—

> "Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
> That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
> How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
> Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you
> From seasons such as these?"

And he makes the King add:—

> "O! I have ta'en
> Too little care of this. Take physic, pomp;
> Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
> That thou may'st shake the superflux to them,
> And show the heavens more just."

On such a night was *Lear* conceived. Shakespeare, sitting at his writing-table, heard the voices of the King, the Fool, Edgar, and Kent on the heath, interwoven with each other, contrapuntally answering each to each, as in a fugue; and it was for the sake of the general effect, in all its sublimity, that he wrote large portions of the tragedy which, in themselves, cannot have interested him. The whole introduction, for instance, deficient as it is in any reasonable motive for the King's behaviour, he took, with his usual sovereign indifference in unessential matters, from the old play.

With Shakespeare we always find that each work is connected with the preceding one, as ring is linked with ring in a chain. In the story of Gloucester the theme of *Othello* is taken up again and varied. The trusting Gloucester is spiritually poisoned by Edmund, exactly as Othello's mind is poisoned by Iago's lies. Edmund calumniates his brother Edgar, shows forged letters from him, wounds himself in a make-believe defence of his father's life against him—in short, upsets Gloucester's balance just as Iago did Othello's. And he employs the very same means as Schiller's Franz Moor employs, two centuries later, to blacken his brother Karl in their old father's estimation. *Die Räuber* is a sort of imitation of this part of *King Lear;* even the father's final blindness is copied.

Shakespeare moves all this away back into primeval times, into the grey days of heathendom; and he welds the two originally independent stories together with such incomparable artistic dexterity that their interaction serves to bring out more forcibly the fundamental idea and feeling of the play. He skilfully contrives that Gloucester's compassion for Lear shall provide Edmund with means to bring about his father's utter ruin, and he ingeniously invents the double passion of Regan and Goneril for Edmund, which leads the two sisters to destroy each other. He fills the tame little play of the earlier writer with horrors such as he had not presented since his youthful days in *Titus Andronicus*, not even shrinking from the tearing out of Gloster's eyes on the stage. He means to show pitilessly what life is. "You see how this world goes," says Lear in the play.

Shakespeare has nowhere else shown evil and good in such immediate opposition — bad and good human beings in such direct conflict with each other; and nowhere else has he so deliberately shunned the customary and conventional issue of

the struggle—the triumph of the good. In the catastrophe, blind and callous Fate blots out the good and the bad together.

Everything centres in the protagonist, poor, old, stupid, great Lear, king every inch of him, and every inch human. Lear's is a passionate nature, irritably nervous, all too ready to act on the first impulse. At heart he is so lovable that he arouses the unalterable devotion of the best among those who surround him; and he is so framed to command and so accustomed to rule, that he misses every moment that power which, in an access of caprice, he has renounced. For a brief space at the beginning of the play the old man stands erect; then he begins to bend. And the weaker he grows the heavier load is heaped upon him, till at last, overburdened, he sinks. He wanders off, groping his way, with his crushing fate upon his back. Then the light of his mind is extinguished; madness seizes him.

And Shakespeare takes this theme of madness and sets it for three voices—divides it between Edgar, who is mad to serve a purpose, but speaks the language of real insanity; the Fool, who is mad by profession, and masks the soundest practical wisdom under the appearance of insanity; and the King, who is bewildered and infected by Edgar's insane talk—the King, who is mad with misery and suffering.

As already remarked, it is evident from the indifference with which Shakespeare takes up the old material to make a beginning and set the play going, that all he really cared about was the essential pathos of the theme, the deep seriousness of the fundamental emotion. The opening scenes are of course incredible. It is only in fairy-tales that a king divides the provinces of his kingdom among his daughters, on the principle that she gets the largest share who can assure him that she loves him most; and only a childish audience could find it conceivable that old Gloucester should instantly believe the most improbable calumnies against a son whose fine character he knew. Shakespeare's individuality does not make itself felt in such parts as these; but it certainly does in the view of life, its course and character, which bursts upon Lear when he goes mad, and which manifests itself here and there all through the play. And Shakespeare's intellect has now attained such mastery, every passion is rendered with such irresistible power, that the play, in spite of its fantastic, unreal basis, produces an effect of absolute *truth*.

"*Lear.* A man may see how this world goes with no eyes. Look with thine ears: see how yond justice rails upon yond simple thief. Hark, in thine ear: change places; and, handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief?—Thou hast seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar?

"*Gloster.* Ay, sir.

"*Lear.* And the creature run from the cur? There thou might'st behold the great image of authority: a dog's obey'd in office."

And then follow outbursts to the effect that the punisher is generally worse than the punished; the beadle flogs the loose woman, but the rascally beadle is as lustful as she. The idea here answers to that in *Measure for Measure:* the beadle should flog himself, not the woman. And then come complaints that the rich are exempt from punishment: dress Sin in armour of gold-plate, and the lance of Justice will shiver against it. Finally, he concentrates his indictment of life in the words:—

> "When we are born, we cry that we are come
> To this great stage of fools."

We hear a refrain from *Hamlet* running through all this. But Hamlet's criticism of life is here taken up by many voices; it sounds louder, and awakens echo upon echo.

The Fool, the best of Shakespeare's Fools, made more conspicuous by coming after the insignificant Clown in *Othello,* is such an echo—mordantly witty, marvellously ingenious. He is the protest of sound common-sense against the foolishness of which Lear has been guilty, but a protest that is pure humour; he never complains, least of all on his own account. Yet all his foolery produces a tragic effect. And the words spoken by one of the knights, "Since my young lady's going into France, sir, the fool hath much pined away," atone for all his sharp speeches to Lear. Amongst Shakespeare's other master-strokes in this play must be reckoned that of exalting the traditional clown, the buffoon, into so high a sphere that he becomes a tragic element of the first order.

In no other play of Shakespeare's has the Fool so many proverbial words of wisdom. Indeed, the whole piece teems with such words: Lear's "'Ay' and 'no,' too, was no good divinity;" Edgar's "Ripeness is all;" Kent's "To be acknowledged, madam, is o'erpaid."

Whilst the elder daughters have inherited and over-developed Lear's bad qualities, Cordelia has fallen heir to his goodness of heart; but he has also transmitted to her a certain obstinacy and pride, but for which the conflict would not have arisen. His first question to her, and her answer to it, are equally wanting in tact. But as the action proceeds, we find that her obstinacy has melted away; her whole being is goodness and charm.

How touching is the passage where Cordelia finds her brain-sick sire, and tends him until, by aid of the healing art, and sleep, and music, he slowly regains his health. Everything is beautiful here, from the first kiss to the last word. Lear is borne sleeping on to the stage. The doctor orders music to sound, and Cordelia says (iv. 7):—

> "*Cor.* O my dear father! Restoration hang
> Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss
> Repair those violent harms, that my two sisters
> Have in thy reverence made!
> *Kent.* Kind and dear princess!
> *Cor.* Had you not been their father, these white flakes
> Had challeng'd pity of them. Was this a face
> To be oppos'd against the warring winds?
> . . . . . .
> Mine enemy's dog,
> Though he had bit me, should have stood that night
> Against my fire."

He awakes, and Cordelia says to him:—

> "*Cor.* How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?
> *Lear.* You do me wrong to take me out o' the grave.
> Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
> Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
> Do scald like molten lead."

Then he comes to himself, asks where he has been, and where he is; is surprised that it is "fair daylight;" remembers what he has suffered:—

> "*Cor.* O look upon me, sir,
> And hold your hands in benediction o'er me.—
> No, sir, you must not kneel."

Notice this last line. It has its history. In the old drama of *King Leir* this kneeling was made a more prominent feature. There the King and his faithful Perillus (so Kent was called in the old play) are wandering about, perishing with hunger and thirst, when they fall in with the King of Gaul and Cordelia, who are spying out the land disguised as peasants. The daughter recognises her father, and gives the starving man food and drink; then, when he is satisfied, he tells her his story in deep anguish of spirit:—

> "*Leir.* O no men's children are vnkind but mine.
> *Cordella.* Condemne not all, because of others crime,
> But looke, deare father, looke, behold and see
> Thy louing daughter speaketh vnto thee.
> (*She kneeles*).
> *Leir.* O, stand thou vp, it is my part to kneele,
> And aske forgiueness for my former faults.
> (*He kneeles*)."

The scene is beautiful, and there is true filial feeling in it, but it would be impossible on the stage, where two persons kneeling to each other cannot but produce a comic effect. The incident, indeed, actually occurs in some of Molière's and Holberg's comedies. Shakespeare understood how to preserve and utilise this (with all other traits of any value in his predecessor's work) in such a manner that only its delicacy remains, while its external awkwardness disappears. Lear says to Cordelia, when they have fallen into the hands of their enemies:—

> "Come, let's away to prison:
> We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage:
> *When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down*
> *And ask of thee forgiveness.* So we'll live,
> And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
> At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
> Talk of court news."

The old play ends naïvely and innocently with the triumph of the good. The King of Gaul and Cordelia conduct Leir home again, tell the wicked daughters sharp truths to their faces, and thereupon totally rout their armies. Leir thanks and rewards all who have been faithful to him, and passes the remainder of

his days in agreeable leisure under the care of his daughter and son-in-law.

Shakespeare does not take such a bright view of life. According to him, Cordelia's army is defeated, and the old King and his daughter are thrown into prison. But no past and no present adversity can crush Lear's spirit now. In spite of everything, in spite of the loss of power, of self-reliance, and for a time of reason, in spite of defeat in the decisive battle, he is as happy as an old man can be. He has his lost daughter again. Age had already isolated him. In the peace that a prison affords he will live not much more lonely than great age is of necessity, shut in with the object, now the sole object, of his love. It seems for a moment as though Shakespeare would say: "Happy is that man, even though he may be in prison, who in the last years of his life has the darling of his heart beside him."

But this is not the conclusion to which Shakespeare leads us. Edmund commands that Cordelia shall be hanged in prison, and the murderer executes his order.

The tragedy does not culminate till Lear enters with Cordelia dead in his arms. After a wild outburst of grief, he asks for a looking-glass to see if she still breathes, and in the pause that ensues Kent says:—

"Is this the promised end?"

And Edgar:—

"Or image of that horror?"

Lear is given a feather. He utters a cry of joy—it moves—she is alive! Then he sees that he has been mistaken. Curses follow, and after them this exquisite touch of characterisation:—

"Her voice was ever soft,
Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman."

Then the disguised Kent makes himself known, and Lear learns that the two criminal daughters are dead. But his capacity for receiving new impressions is almost gone. He can feel nothing but Cordelia's death: "And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life!" He faints and dies.

"*Kent.* Vex not his ghost: O let him pass! He hates him
That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer."

That this old man should lose his youngest daughter—this is the catastrophe which Shakespeare has made so great that it is with reason Kent asks: "Is this the promised end? Is this the end of the world?" In the loss of this daughter he loses all; and the abyss that opens seems wide enough and deep enough to engulph a world.

The loss of a Cordelia—that is the great catastrophe. We all lose, or live under the dread of losing, our Cordelia. The loss of the dearest and the best, of that which alone makes life worth living—that is the tragedy of life. Hence the question: Is this the end of the world? Yes, it is. Each of us has only his world, and lives with the threat of its destruction hanging over him. And in the year 1606 Shakespeare was in no mood to write other than dramas on the doom of worlds.

For the end of all things seems to have come when we see the ruin of the moral world—when he who is noble and trustful like Lear is rewarded with ingratitude and hate; when he who is honest and brave like Kent is punished with dishonour; when he who is merciful like Gloucester, taking the suffering and injured under his roof, has the loss of his eyes for his reward; when he who is noble and faithful like Edgar must wander about in the semblance of a maniac, with a rag round his loins; when, finally, she who is the living emblem of womanly dignity and of filial tenderness towards an old father who has become as it were her child—when she meets her death before his eyes at the hands of assassins! What avails it that the guilty slaughter and poison each other afterwards? None the less is this the titanic tragedy of human life; there rings forth from it a chorus of passionate, jeering, wildly yearning, and desperately wailing voices.

Sitting by his fire at night, Shakespeare heard them in the roar of the storm against the window-pane, in the howling of the wind in the chimneys—heard all these terrible voices contrapuntally inwoven one with another as in a fugue, and heard in them the torture-shriek of suffering humanity.

XXVII

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA—WHAT ATTRACTED SHAKESPEARE TO THE SUBJECT

If it is the last titanic tragedy of human life that has now been written, what is there more to add? There is nothing left to write. Shakespeare may lay down his pen.

So it would seem to us. But what is the actual course of events? what do we see? That for years to come, work follows work in uninterrupted succession. It is with Shakespeare as with all other great, prolific geniuses; time and again we think, "Now he has done his best, now he has reached his zenith, now he has touched the limit of his power, exhausted his treasury, made his crowning effort, his highest bid,"—when behold! he takes up a new work the day after he has let go the old; takes it up as if nothing had happened, unexhausted, unwearied by the tremendous task he has accomplished, fresh as if he had just arisen from repose, indefatigable as though he were only now setting forth with his name and fame yet to be won.

King Lear makes a sensation among Shakespeare's impressionable audience; crowds flock to the theatre to see it; the book is quickly sold out—two quarto editions in 1608; all minds are occupied with it; they have not nearly exhausted its treasures of profundity, of wit, of practical wisdom, of poetry—Shakespeare alone no longer gives a moment's thought to it; he has left it behind and is deep in his next work.

A world-catastrophe! He has no mind now to write of anything else. What is sounding in his ears, what is filling his thoughts, is the crash of a world falling to ruin.

For this music he seeks out a new text. He has not far to seek; he has found it already. Since the time when he wrote *Julius Cæsar*, Plutarch has never been out of his hands. In his first Roman drama he depicted the fall of the world-republic; but

in that world, as a whole, fresh, strong forces were still at work. Cæsar's spirit dominated it. We heard more of his greatness than we saw of it; but we could infer his true significance from the effects of his disappearance from the scene. And the republic still lived in spirits proud like Brutus, or strong like Cassius, and did not expire with them. By Brutus's side stood Cato's daughter, delicate but steadfast, the tenderest and bravest of wives. In short, there were still many sound elements in the body politic. The republic fell by historical necessity, but there was no decadence of mind, no degeneracy, no ruin.

But Shakespeare read on in his Plutarch and came to the life of Marcus Antonius. This he read first out of curiosity, then with attention, then with eager emotion. For here, here was the real downfall of the Roman world. Not till now did he hear the final, fatal crash of the old world-republic. The might of Rome, stern and austere, shivered at the touch of Eastern voluptuousness. Everything sank, everything fell—character and will, dominions and principalities, men and women. Everything was worm-eaten, serpent-bitten, poisoned by sensuality—everything tottered and collapsed. Defeat in Asia, defeat in Europe, defeat in Africa, on the Egyptian coast; then self-abandonment and suicide.

Again a poisoning-story like that of *Macbeth*. In Macbeth's case the virus was ambition, in Antony's it was sensuality. But the story of Antony, with its far-reaching effects, was a very much weightier and more interesting subject than the story of the little barbarian Scottish king. Macbeth was spiritually poisoned by his wife, a woman ambitious to bloodthirstiness, an abnormal woman, more masculine than her husband, almost a virago. She speaks of dashing out the brains of babes as of one of those venial offences which one may commit on an emergency rather than break one's word, and she undertakes without a tremor to smear the faces of the murdered King's servants with his blood. What is Lady Macbeth to us? What's Hecuba to us? And what was this Hecuba now to Shakespeare!

In a very different and more personal way did he feel himself attracted by Cleopatra. She poisons slowly, half-involuntarily, and in wholly feminine fashion, the faculty of rule, the generalship, the courage, the greatness of Antony, ruler of half the world—and her, Cleopatra, he, Shakespeare, knew. He knew

her as we all know her, the woman of women, quintessentiated Eve, or rather Eve and the serpent in one—"My serpent of old Nile," as Antony calls her. Cleopatra—the name meant beauty and fascination—it meant alluring sensuality combined with finished culture—it meant ruthless squandering of human life and happiness and the noblest powers. Here, indeed, was the woman who could intoxicate and undo a man, even the greatest; uplift him to such happiness as he had never known before, and then plunge him into perdition, and along with him that half of the world which it was his to rule.

Who knows! If he himself, William Shakespeare, had met her, who knows if he would have escaped with his life? And had he not met her? Was it not she whom in bygone days he had met and loved, and by whom he had been beloved and betrayed? It moved him strongly to find Cleopatra described as so dark, so tawny. His thoughts dwelt upon this. He too had stood in close relation to a dark, ensnaring woman—one whom in bitter moments he had been tempted to call a gipsy; "a right gipsy," as Cleopatra is called in this play, by those who are afraid of her or angry with her. She of whom he never thought without emotion, his black enchantress, his life's angel and fiend, whom he had hated and adored at the same time, whom he had despised even while he sued for her favour—what was she but a new incarnation of that dangerous, ensnaring serpent of the Nile! And how nearly had his whole inner world collapsed like a soap-bubble in his association with, and separation from, her! That would indeed have been the ruin of a world! How he had revelled and writhed, exulted and complained in those days! played ducks and drakes with his life, squandered his days and nights! Now he was a maturer man, a gentleman, a landed proprietor and tithe-farmer; but in him still lived the artist-Bohemian, fitted to mate with the gipsy queen.

Three times in Shakespeare (*Romeo and Juliet*, ii. 4, and *Antony and Cleopatra*, i. 1, and iv. 12) Cleopatra is slightingly called *gipsy*, probably from the word's resemblance in sound to *Egyptian*. But there was a certain significance in this word-play; for the high-mindedness of the princess and the fickleness of the gipsy were mysteriously combined in her nature. And how well he knew this combination! The model for the great Egyptian queen stood living before his eyes. With the same palette which

he had used not many years before to sketch the "dark lady" of the Sonnets, he could now paint this monumental historical portrait.

This figure charmed him, attracted him strongly. He came fresh from Cordelia. He had built up that whole titanic tragedy of *King Lear* as a pedestal for her. And what is Cordelia? The ideal which one's imagination reads on a young girl's white brow, and which the young girl herself hardly understands, much less realises. She was the ray of white light—the great, clear symbol of the purity and nobility of heart which were expressed in her very name. He believed in her; he had looked into her innocent eyes, whose expression inspired him with the idea of her character; he had chanced upon that obstinate, almost ungracious truthfulness in young women, which seems to augur a treasure of real feeling behind it; but he had not known or associated with Cordelia in daily life.

Cleopatra, on the contrary, O Cleopatra! He passed in succession before his eyes the most feminine, and therefore the most dangerous, women he had known since he gained a footing in London, and he gave her the grace of the one, the caprices of the other, the teasing humour of a third, a fourth's instability; but deep in his heart he was thinking of one only, who had been to him all women in one, a mistress in the art of love and of awakening love, inciting to it as no other incited, and faithlessly betraying as no other betrayed—true and false, daring and frail, actress and lover without peer!

There were several earlier English dramas on the subject of Antony and Cleopatra, but only one or two of them are worth mentioning. There was Daniel's *Cleopatra* of 1594, founded partly on Plutarch's Lives of Antonius and Pompeius, partly on a French book called the "History of the Three Triumvirates." Then there was a play entitled *The Tragedie of Antonie*, translated from the French by the Countess of Pembroke, the mother of Shakespeare's friend, in the year 1595. Shakespeare does not seem to have been indebted to either of these works, nor to any of the numerous Italian plays on the subject. He had none of them before him when he sat down to write his drama, which appears to have been acted for the first time shortly before the 20th of May 1608, on which day it is entered in the Stationers' Register as "a booke called *Anthony and Cleopatra*," by Edward

Blount, one of the publishers who afterwards brought out the First Folio. It is probable, therefore, that the play was written during the course of the year 1607.

The only source, probably, from which Shakespeare drew, and from which he drew largely, was the Life of Marcus Antonius, in North's translation of Plutarch. It was on the basis of what he read there that he planned and executed his work, even where, as in the first act, he writes without in every point adhering to Plutarch. The farther the drama progresses the more closely does he keep to Plutarch's narrative, ingeniously and carefully making use of every touch, great or small, that appears to him characteristic. It is evident, indeed, that several traits are included merely because they are true, or rather because Shakespeare thinks they are true. At times he introduces quite unnecessary personages, like Dolabella, simply because he will not put into the mouth of another the message which Plutarch assigns to him; and it is very seldom that he permits himself even the most trifling alteration.

Shakespeare ennobled the character of Antony to a certain extent. Plutarch depicts him as a Hercules in stature, and inclined to ape the demigod by certain affectations of dress; a hearty, rough soldier, given to praising himself and making game of others, but capable, too, of enduring banter as well as praise. His inclination to prodigality and luxurious living made him rapacious, but he was ignorant of most of the infamies that were committed in his name. There was no craft in his nature, but he was brutal, recklessly profligate, and devoid of all sense of decency. A popular, light-hearted, free-handed general, who sat far too many hours at table—indifferent whether it were with his own soldiers or with princes—who showed himself drunken on the public street, and would "sleepe out his drunkennesse" in the light of day, degraded himself by the lowest debauchery, exhausted whole treasuries on his journeys, travelled with priceless gold and silver plate for his table, had chariots drawn by lions, gave away tens of thousands of pounds in a single gift; but in defeat and misfortune rose to his full height as the inspiriting leader who uncomplainingly renounced all his own comforts and kept up the courage of his men. Calamity always raised him above himself—a sufficient proof that, in spite of everything, he was not without a strain of greatness. There was something of the stage-

king in him, something of the Murat, a touch of Skobeloff, and a suggestion of the mediæval knight. What could be less antique than his twice challenging Octavius to single combat? And in the end, when misfortune overwhelmed him, and those on whom he had showered benefits ungratefully forsook him, there was something in him that recalled Timon of Athens nursing his melancholy and his bitterness. He himself recognised the affinity.

Women, according to Plutarch, were Antony's bane. After a youth in which many women had had a share, he married Fulvia, the widow of the notorious tribune, Clodius. She acquired the mastery over him, and bent him to all her wishes, so that from her hand he passed into Cleopatra's, ready broken-in to feminine dominion.

According to Plutarch, moreover, Antony was endowed with a considerable flexibility of character. He was fond of disguising himself, of playing practical jokes. Once, for instance, on returning from a campaign, he, dressed as a slave, delivered to his wife, Fulvia, a letter telling of his own death, and then suddenly embraced her as she stood terror-struck. This was only one of many manifestations of his power of self-metamorphosis. Sometimes he would seem nerveless, sometimes iron-nerved; sometimes effeminate, sometimes brave to foolhardiness; now avid of honour, now devoid of honour; now revengeful, now magnanimous. This undulant diversity and changeableness in Antony fascinated Shakespeare. Yet he did not accept the character exactly as he found it in Plutarch. He threw into relief the brighter sides of it, building upon the foundation of Antony's inborn magnificence, the superb prodigality of his nature, his kingly generosity, and that reckless determination to enjoy the passing moment, which is a not uncommon attribute both of great rulers and great artists.

There was a crevice in this antique figure through which Shakespeare's soul could creep in. He had no difficulty in imagining himself into Antony's moods; he was able to play him just as, in his capacity of actor, he could play a part that was quite in his line. Antony possessed that power of metamorphosis which is the essence of the artist nature. He was at one and the same time a master in the art of dissimulation—see his funeral oration in *Julius Cæsar*, and in this play the manner in which he

takes Octavia to wife—and an open, honest character; he was in a way faithful, felt closely bound to his mistress and to his comrades-in-arms, and was yet alarmingly unstable. In other words, his was an artist-nature.

Among his many contradictory qualities two stood out pre-eminent: the bent towards action and the bent towards enjoyment. Octavius says in the play that these two propensities are equally strong in him, and this is perhaps just about the truth. If, with his immense bodily strength, he had been still more voluptuously inclined, he would have become what in later history Augustus the Strong became, and Cleopatra would have been his Aurora von Königsmarck. If energy had been more strongly developed in him, then generalship and love of drink and dissipation would have combined in him much as they did in Alexander the Great, and Antony in Alexandria would have presented a parallel to Alexander in Babylon. The scales hung evenly balanced for a long time, until Antony met his fate in Cleopatra.

Shakespeare has endowed them both with extreme personal beauty, though neither of them is young. Antony's followers see in him a Mars, in her a Venus. Even the gruff Enobarbus (ii. 2) declares that when he saw her for the first time, she "o'erpictured that Venus where we see the fancy outwork nature." She is the enchantress whom, according to Antony, "everything becomes" —chiding, laughing, weeping, as well as repose. She is "a wonderful piece of work." Antony can never leave her, for, as Enobarbus says (ii. 2; compare Sonnet lvi.):—

> "Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
> Her infinite variety. Other women cloy
> The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry
> Where most she satisfies; for vilest things
> Become themselves in her."

What matters it that Shakespeare pictures her to himself dark as an African (she was in reality of the purest Greek blood), or that she, with some exaggeration, calls herself old? She can afford to jest on the subject of her complexion as on that of her age:—

> "Think on me
> That am with Phœbus amorous pinches black,
> And wrinkled deep in time."

She is what Antony calls her when he (viii. 2) exclaims in ecstasy, "O thou day o' the world!"

In person and carriage Antony is as if created for her. It is not only Cleopatra's passion that speaks when she says of Antony (v. 2):—

> "I dream'd there was an Emperor Antony . . .
> His face was as the heavens . . ."

And to the beauty of his face answers that of his voice:—

> "Propertied
> As all the tunèd spheres, and that to friends;
> But when he meant to quail and shake the orb,
> He was as rattling thunder."

She prizes his rich, generous nature:—

> "For his bounty,
> There was no winter in't; and autumn 'twas,
> That grew the more by reaping:
> . . . . . .
> In his livery
> Walk'd crowns and crownets; realms and islands were
> As plates dropped from his pocket."

And just as Enobarbus maintained that Cleopatra was more beautiful than that pictured Venus in which imagination had surpassed nature, Cleopatra, in her exaltation after Antony's death, maintains that his glorious humanity surpassed what fancy can invent:—

> "*Cleopatra.* Think you there was or might be such a man
> As this I dreamt of?
> *Dolabella.* Gentle madam, no.
> *Cleopatra.* You lie, up to the hearing of the gods.
> But, if there be, or ever were, one such,
> It's past the size of dreaming: nature wants stuff
> To vie strange forms with fancy; yet, to imagine
> An Antony, were nature's piece 'gainst fancy,
> Condemning shadows quite."

Not of an Antony should we speak thus now-a-days, but of a Napoleon in the world of action, of a Michael Angelo, a Beethoven, or a Shakespeare in the world of art.

But the figure of Antony had to be one which made such a transfiguration possible in order that it might be worthy to stand by the side of hers who is the queen of beauty, the very genius of love.

Pascal says in his *Pensées :* "Si le nez de Cléopâtre eût été plus court, toute la face de la terre aurait changé." But her nose was, as the old coins show us, exactly what it ought to have been; and in Shakespeare we feel that she is not only beauty itself, but charm, except in one single scene, where the news of Antony's marriage throws her into a paroxysm of unbeautiful rage. Her charm is of the sense-intoxicating kind, and she has, by study and art, developed those powers of attraction which she possessed from the outset, till she has become inexhaustible in inventiveness and variety. She is the woman who has passed from hand to hand, from her husband and brother to Pompey, from Pompey to the great Cæsar, from Cæsar to countless others. She is the courtesan by temperament, but none the less does she possess the genius for a single, undivided love. She, like Antony, is complex, and being a woman, she is more so than he. *Vir duplex, femina triplex.*

From the beginning and almost to the end of the tragedy she plays the part of the great coquette. What she says and does is for long only the outcome of the coquette's desire and power to captivate by incalculable caprices. She asks where Antony is, and sends for him (i. 2). He comes. She exclaims: "We will not look upon him," and goes. Presently his absence irks her, and again she sends a messenger to remind him of her and keep him in play (i. 3):—

> "If you find him sad,
> Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report
> That I am sudden sick . . ."

He learns of his wife's death. She would have been beside herself if he had shown grief, but he speaks with coldness of the loss, and she attacks him because of this:—

> "Where be the sacred vials thou shouldst fill
> With sorrowful water? Now I see, I see
> In Fulvia's death how mine received shall be."

This incalculability, this capriciousness of hers extends to the smallest matters. She invites Mardian to play a game of billiards

with her (an amusing anachronism), and, finding him ready, she turns him off with: "I'll none now."

But all this mutability does not exclude in her the most real, most passionate love for Antony. The best proof of its strength is the way in which she speaks of him when he is absent (i. 5):—

> "O Charmian!
> Where think'st thou he is now? Stands he, or sits he?
> Or does he walk? or is he on his horse?
> O happy horse, to bear the weight of Antony!
> Do bravely, horse, for wott'st thou whom thou mov'st?
> The demi-Atlas of this earth, the arm
> And burgonet of men."

So it is but the truth she is speaking when she tells with what immovable certainty and trust, with what absolute assurance for the future, love filled both her and Antony when they saw each other for the first time (i. 3):—

> "No going then;
> Eternity was in our lips and eyes,
> Bliss in our brows' bent; none our parts so poor,
> But was a race of heaven."

Nor is it irony when Enobarbus, in reply to Antony's complaint (i. 2), "She is cunning past man's thought," makes answer, "Alack, sir, no; her passions are made of nothing but the finest part of pure love." This is literally true—only that the love is not pure in the sense of being sublimated or unegoistic, but in the sense of being quintessential erotic emotion, chemically free from all the other elements usually combined with it.

And outward circumstances harmonise with the character and vehemence of this passion. He lays the kingdoms of the East at her feet; with reckless prodigality, she lavishes the wealth of Africa on the festivals she holds in his honour.

XXVIII

THE DARK LADY AS A MODEL—THE FALL OF THE REPUBLIC A WORLD-CATASTROPHE

ASSUMING that it was Shakespeare's design in *Antony and Cleopatra*, as in *King Lear*, to evoke the conception of a world-catastrophe, we see that he could not in this play, as in *Macbeth* or *Othello*, focus the entire action around the leading characters alone. He could not even make the other characters completely subordinate to them; that would have rendered it impossible for him to give the impression of majestic breadth, of an action embracing half of the then known world, which he wanted for the sake of the concluding effect.

He required in the group of figures surrounding Octavius Cæsar, and in the groups round Lepidus, Ventidius, and Sextus Pompeius, a counterpoise to Antony's group. He required the placid beauty and Roman rectitude of Octavia as a contrast to the volatile, intoxicating Egyptian. He required Enobarbus to serve as a sort of chorus and introduce an occasional touch of irony amid the high-flown passion of the play. In short, he required a throng of personages, and (in order to make us feel that the action was not taking place in some narrow precinct in a corner of Europe, but upon the stage of the world) he required a constant coming and going, sending and receiving of messengers, whose communications are awaited with anxiety, heard with bated breath, and not infrequently alter at one blow the situation of the chief characters.

The ambition which characterised Antony's past is what determines his relation to this great world; the love which has now taken such entire possession of him determines his relation to the Egyptian queen, and the consequent loss of all that his ambition had won for him. Whilst in a tragedy like Goethe's *Clavigo*, ambition plays the part of the tempter, and love is conceived as the good, the legitimate power, here it is love that is reprehensible,

ambition that is proclaimed to be the great man's vocation and duty.

Thus Antony says (i. 2):

> "These strong Egyptian fetters I must break,
> Or lose myself in dotage."

We saw that one element of Shakespeare's artist-nature was of use to him in his modelling of the figure of Antony. He himself had ultimately broken his fetters, or rather life had broken them for him; but as he wrote this great drama, he lived through again those years in which he himself had felt and spoken as he now made Antony feel and speak:

> "A thousand groans, but thinking on thy face,
> One on another's neck, do witness bear,
> Thy black is fairest in my judgment's place."
> —(*Sonnet* cxxxi.)

Day after day that woman now stood before him as his model who had been his life's Cleopatra—she to whom he had written of "lust in action":

> "Mad in pursuit, and in possession so;
> Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme;
> A bliss in proof,—and prov'd, a very woe."
> —(*Sonnet* cxxix.)

He had seen in her an irresistible and degrading Delilah, the Delilah whom De Vigny centuries later anathematised in a famous couplet.[1] He had bewailed, as Antony does now, that his beloved had belonged to many:

> "If eyes, corrupt by over-partial looks,
> Be anchor'd in the bay where all men ride,
> . . . . . .
> Why should my heart think that a several plot
> Which my heart knows the wide world's common place?"
> —(*Sonnet* cxxxvii.)

He had, like Antony, suffered agonies from the coquetry she would lavish on any one she wanted to win. He had then burst

[1] "Toujours ce compagnon dont le cœur n'est pas sûr,
La Femme—enfant malade et douze fois impur."

forth in complaint, as Antony in the drama breaks out into frenzy:

> "Tell me thou lov'st elsewhere; but in my sight,
> Dear heart, forbear to glance thine eye aside:
> What need'st thou wound with cunning, when thy might
> Is more than my o'er-pressed defence can 'bide?"
> —(*Sonnet* cxxxix.)

Now he no longer upbraided her; now he crowned her with a queenly diadem, and placed her, living, breathing, and in the largest sense true to nature, on that stage which was his world.

As in *Othello* he had made the lover-hero about as old as he was himself at the time he wrote the play, so now it interested him to represent this stately and splendid lover who was no longer young. In the Sonnets he had already dwelt upon his age. He says, for instance, in Sonnet cxxxviii.:

> "When my love swears that she is made of truth,
> I do believe her, though I know she lies,
> That she might think me some untutor'd youth,
> Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.
> Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
> Although she knows my days are past the best,
> Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue."

When Antony and Cleopatra perished with each other, she was in her thirty-ninth, he in his fifty-fourth year. She was thus almost three times as old as Juliet, he more than double the age of Romeo. This correspondence with his own age pleases Shakespeare's fancy, and the fact that time has had no power to sear or wither this pair seems to hold them still farther aloof from the ordinary lot of humanity. The traces years have left upon the two have only given them a deeper beauty. All that they themselves in sadness, or others in spite, say to the contrary, signifies nothing. The contrast between their age in years and that which their beauty and passion make for them merely enhances and adds piquancy to the situation. It is in sheer malice that Pompey exclaims (ii. 1):

> "But all the charms of love,
> Salt Cleopatra, soften thy *waned* lip!"

This means no more than her own description of herself as "wrinkled." And it is on purpose to give the idea of Antony's

age, of which in Plutarch there is no indication, that Shakespeare makes him dwell on the mixed colour of his own hair. He says (iii. 9):

> "My very hairs do mutiny; for the white
> Reprove the brown for rashness, and they them
> For fear and doting."

In the moment of despair he uses the expression (iii. 11): "To the boy Cæsar send this grizzled head." And again, after the last victory, he recurs to the idea in a tone of triumph. Exultingly he addresses Cleopatra (iv. 8):

> "What, girl! though grey
> Do something mingle with our younger brown, yet ha' we
> A brain that nourishes our nerves, and can
> Get goal for goal of youth."

With a sure hand Shakespeare has depicted in Antony the mature man's fear of letting a moment pass unutilised: the vehement desire to enjoy before the hour strikes when all enjoyment must cease. Thus Antony says in one of his first speeches (i. 1):

> "Now, for the love of Love and her soft hours. . . .
> There's not a minute of our lives should stretch
> Without some pleasure now."

Then he feels the necessity of breaking his bonds. He makes Fulvia's death serve his purpose of gaining Cleopatra's consent to his departure; but even then he is not free. In order to bring out the contrast between Octavius the statesman and Antony the lover, Shakespeare emphasises the fact that Octavius has reports of the political situation brought to him every hour, whilst Antony receives no other daily communication than the regularly arriving letters from Cleopatra which foment the longing that draws him back to Egypt.

As a means of allaying the storm and gaining peace to love his queen at leisure, he agrees to marry his opponent's sister, knowing that, when it suits him, he will neglect and repudiate her. Then vengeance overtakes him for having so contemptuously thrown away the empire over more than a third of the civilised world—vengeance for having said as he embraced Cleopatra (i. 1):

> "Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
> Of the ranged empire fall! Here is my space."

Rome melts through his fingers. Rome proclaims him a foe to her empire, and declares war against him. And he loses his power, his renown, his whole position, in the defeat which he so contemptibly brings upon himself at Actium. In Cleopatra flight was excusable. Her flight in the drama (which follows Plutarch and tradition) is due to cowardice; in reality it was prompted by tactical, judicious motives. But Antony was in honour bound to stay. He follows her in the tragedy (as in reality) from brainless, contemptible incapacity to remain when she has gone; leaving an army of 112,000 men and a fleet of 450 ships in the lurch, without leader or commander. Nine days did his troops await his return, rejecting every proposal of the enemy, incapable of believing in the desertion and flight of the general they admired and trusted. When at last they could no longer resist the conviction that he had sunk his soldier's honour in shame, they went over to Octavius.

After this everything turns on the mutual relation of Antony and Cleopatra, and Shakespeare has admirably depicted its ecstasies and its revulsions. Never before had they loved each other so wildly and so rapturously. Now it is not only he who openly calls her "Thou day o' the world!" She answers him with the cry, "Lord of lords! O infinite virtue!" (iv. 8).

Yet never before has their mutual distrust been so deep. She, who was at no time really great except in the arts of love and coquetry, has always felt distrustful of him, and yet never distrustful enough; for though she was prepared for a great deal, his marriage with Octavia overwhelmed her. He, knowing her past, knowing how often she has thrown herself away, and understanding her temperament, believes her false to him even when she is innocent, even when, as with Desdemona, only the vaguest of appearances are against her. In the end we see Antony develop into an Othello.

Here and there we come upon something in his character which seems to indicate that Shakespeare had been lately occupied with Macbeth. Cleopatra stimulates Antony's voluptuousness, his sensuality, as Lady Macbeth spurred on her husband's ambition; and Antony fights his last battle with Macbeth's Berserk fury, facing with savage bravery what he knows to be invincibly superior force. But in his emotional life after the disaster of Actium it is Othello whom he more nearly resembles. He causes Octavius's

messenger, Thyreus, to be whipped, simply because Cleopatra at parting has allowed him to kiss her hand. When some of her ships take to flight, he immediately believes in an alliance between her and the enemy, and heaps the coarsest invectives upon her, almost worse than those with which Othello overwhelms Desdemona. And in his monologue (iv. 10) he raves groundlessly like Othello:

> "Betray'd I am.
> O this false soul of Egypt! this grave charm,—
> Whose eye beck'd forth my wars, and call'd them home,
> Whose bosom was my crownet, my chief end,—
> Like a right gipsy, hath, at fast and loose,
> Beguil'd me to the very heart of loss."

They both, though faithless to the rest of the world, meant to be true to each other, but in the hour of trial they place no trust in each other's faithfulness. And all these strong emotions have shaken Antony's judgment. The braver he becomes in his misfortune, the more incapable is he of seeing things as they really are. Enobarbus closes the third act most felicitously with the words:

> "I see still
> A diminution in our captain's brain
> Restores his heart: when valour preys on reason
> It eats the sword it fights with."

To tranquillise Antony's jealous frenzy, Cleopatra, who always finds readiest aid in a lie, sends him the false tidings of her death. In grief over her loss, he falls on his sword and mortally wounds himself. He is carried to her, and dies. She bursts forth:

> "Noblest of men, woo't die?
> Hast thou no care of me? shall I abide
> In this dull world, which in thy absence is
> No better than a sty?—O! see, my women,
> The crown o' the earth doth melt."

In Shakespeare, however, her first thought is not of dying herself. She endeavours to come to a compromise with Octavius, hands over to him an inventory of her treasures, and tries to trick him out of the larger half. It is only when she has ascertained that nothing, neither admiration for her beauty nor pity for her misfortunes, moves his cold sagacity, and that he is determined

to exhibit her humiliation to the populace of Rome as one of the spectacles of his triumph, that she lets "the worm of Nilus" give her her death.

In these passages the poet has placed Cleopatra's behaviour in a much more unfavourable light than the Greek historian, whom he follows as far as details are concerned; and he has evidently done so wittingly and purposely, in order to complete his home-thrust at the type of woman whose dangerousness he has embodied in her. In Plutarch all these negotiations with Octavius were a feint to deceive the vigilance with which he thought to prevent her from killing herself. Suicide is her one thought, and he has baulked her in her first attempt. She pretends to cling to her treasures only to delude him into the belief that she still clings to life, and her heroic imposture is successful. Shakespeare, for whom she is ever the quintessence of the she-animal in woman, disparages her intentionally by suppressing the historical explanation of her behaviour.[1]

The English critic, Arthur Symons, writes: "*Antony and Cleopatra* is the most wonderful, I think, of all Shakespeare's plays, and it is so mainly because the figure of Cleopatra is the most wonderful of Shakespeare's women. And not of Shakespeare's women only, but perhaps the most wonderful of women."

This is carrying enthusiasm almost too far. But thus much is true: the great attraction of this masterpiece lies in the unique figure of Cleopatra, elaborated as it is with all Shakespeare's human experience and artistic enthusiasm. But the greatness of the world-historic drama proceeds from the genius with which he has entwined the private relations of the two lovers with the course of history and the fate of empires. Just as Antony's ruin results from his connection with Cleopatra, so does the fall of the Roman Republic result from the contact of the simple hardihood of the West with the luxury of the East. Antony is Rome, Cleopatra is the Orient. When he perishes, a prey to the voluptuousness of the East, it seems as though Roman greatness and the Roman Republic expired with him.

[1] Goethe has a marked imitation of Shakespeare's Cleopatra in the Adelheid of *Götz von Berlichingen*. And he has placed Weislingen between Adelheid and Maria as Antony stands between Cleopatra and Octavia—bound to the former and marrying the latter.

Not Cæsar's ambition, not Cæsar's assassination, but this crumbling to pieces of Roman greatness fourteen years later brings home to us the ultimate fall of the old world-republic, and impresses us with that sense of *universal annihilation* which in this play, as in *King Lear*, Shakespeare aims at begetting.

This is no tragedy of a domestic, limited nature like the conclusion of *Othello;* there is no young Fortinbras here, as in *Hamlet*, giving the promise of brighter and better times to come; the victory of Octavius brings glory to no one and promises nothing. No; the final picture is that which Shakespeare was bent on painting from the moment he felt himself attracted by this great theme—the picture of a world-catastrophe.

BOOK THIRD

I

DISCORD AND SCORN

OUT of tune—out of tune!

Out of tune the instrument whereon so many enthralling melodies had been played—glad and gay, plaintive or resentful, full of love and full of sorrow. Out of tune the mind which had felt so keenly, thought so deeply, spoken so temperately, and stood so firmly "midst passion's whirlpool, storm, and whirlwind." His life's philosophy has become a disgust of life, his melancholy seeks the darkest side of all things, his mirth is grown to bitter scorn, and his wit is without shame.

There was a time when all before his eyes was green—vernally green, life's own lush, unfaded colour. This was followed by a period of gloom, during which he watched the shadows of life spread over the bright and beautiful, blotting out their colours. Now it is black, and worse than black; he sees the base mire cover the earth with its filth, and heeds how it fills the air with its stench.

Shakespeare had come to the end of his first great circumnavigation of life and human nature: an immense disillusionment was the result. Expectation and disappointment, yearning and content, life's gladness and holiday-making, battle mood and triumph, inspired wrath and desperate vehemence—all that once had thrilled him is now fused and lost in contempt.

Disdain has become a persistent mood, and scorn of mankind flows with the blood in his veins. Scorn for princes and people; for heroes, who are but fellow-brawlers and braggarts after all; and for artists, who are but flatterers and parasites seeking possible patrons. Scorn for old age, in whose venerableness he sees only the unction or hypocrisy of an old twaddler. Scorn for

youth, wherein he sees but profligacy, slackness, and gullibility, while all enthusiasts are impostors, and all idealists fools. Men are either coarse and unprincipled, or so weakly sentimental as to be under a woman's thumb; and woman's distinguishing qualities are feebleness, voluptuousness, fickleness, and falsehood; a fool he who trusts himself to them or lets his actions depend upon them.

This mood has been growing on Shakespeare for some time. We have felt it grow. It shows first in *Hamlet*, but is harmless as yet in comparison with the scathing bitterness of later times. There is a breath, a whisper, in the "Frailty, thy name is Woman!" addressed to Hamlet's mother. Ophelia is rather futile than specially weak; she is never false, still less faithless. Even the inconstant Queen Gertrude can scarcely be called false.

There was malignity and temper in that challenge of moral hypocrisy, *Measure for Measure*, and enough earnestness to overpower the comic, although not sufficient bitterness to make the peaceful conclusion impossible. The tragedy of *Macbeth* was brought to a consoling end; the powers of good triumphed at the last. There was only one malign character in *Othello*, evil indeed, but solitary. Othello, Desdemona, Emilia, &c., are all good at heart. There is no bitterness in *Lear*, no scorn of mankind, but sympathy and a wonderful compassion pervading and dominating all. Shakespeare has divided his own Ego among the characters of this play, in order to share with them the miseries and suffering of life on this earth; he has not gathered himself up to judge and despise.

It is from thenceforward that the undertone of contempt first begins to be felt. A period of some years follows, in which his being narrows and concentrates itself upon an abhorrence of human nature, accompanied, so far as we can judge, by a correspondingly enormous self-esteem. It is as though he had for a moment felt such a scorn for his surroundings of court and people, friends and rivals, men and women, as had nearly driven him wild.

We see the germs of it in *Antony and Cleopatra*. What a fool is this Antony, who puts his reputation and a world-wide dominion in jeopardy in order to be near a cold-blooded coquette, who has passed from hand to hand, and whose caprice puts on all the colours of the rainbow. We find it in full bloom in

Troilus and Cressida. What a simpleton this Troilus, who, credulous as a child, devotes himself body and soul to a Cressida; a typical classic she, treachery in woman's form, as false and flighty as foam upon the waves, whose fickleness has become a by-word.

Shakespeare has now reached that point of departure where man feels the need of stripping woman of the glamour with which romantic naïveté and sensual attraction have surrounded her, and finds a gratification in seeing merely the sex in her. Sympathy with love, and a conception of woman as an object worthy of love, goes the way of all other sympathies and illusions at this stage. "All is vanity," says Kohelet, and Shakespeare with him. As in all artist souls, there was in his a peculiar blending of enthusiast and cynic. He has now parted with enthusiasm for a time, and cynicism is paramount.

Such an all-pervading change in the disposition and temper of a great personality was not without its reasons, possibly its one first cause. We can trace its workings without divining its origin, but we may seek to orient ourselves with regard to its conditions. Leverier came to the conclusion in 1846 that the disturbances in the path of Uranus were caused by something behind the planet which neither he nor anybody else had ever seen. He indicated its probable position, and three weeks afterwards Galle found Neptune on the very spot. Unfortunately, Shakespeare's history is so very obscure, and such fruitless search in every direction has been made after fresh documents, that we have no great hope of finding any new light.

We can but glance around the horizon of his life, and note how English circumstances and conditions grouped themselves about him. Material for cheering or depressing reflections can be found at all times, but the mind is not always equally prone to assimilate the cheering or depressing. Certain it is that Shakespeare has now elected to seek out and dwell upon the ugly and sorrowful, the unclean and the repulsive. His melancholy finds its nourishment therein, and his bitterness has learned to suck poison from every noxious plant which borders his path through life. His contempt of mankind and his weariness of existence swell and grow with each experience, and in the events and conditions of those years there was surely matter enough for abhorrence, rancour, and scorn.

II

THE COURT—THE KING'S FAVOURITES AND RALEIGH

UNDER the circumstances Shakespeare could do nothing but keep as close to King and Court as possible, even though the King's dreary, and the Court's profligate qualities grew year by year. James aspired to a comparison with Solomon for wisdom; he certainly resembled him in prodigality, and Henry III. of France in his susceptibility to manly beauty. His passion for his various favourites recalls that of Edward II. for Gaveston in Marlowe's drama. He was, says a chronicle of the time, as susceptible as any schoolgirl to handsome features and well-formed limbs in a man. The parallels his contemporaries drew between him and his predecessor on this score did not work out to his advantage. Elizabeth, they said, who was unmarried, loved only individuals of the opposite sex, all eminent men, whom, even then, she never allowed to rule her. James, on the contrary, was married, and yet entertained a passion for one *mignon* after another, giving the most exalted positions in the country to these men, who were worthless and arrogant, and by whom he was entirely led. In our day Swinburne has characterised James as combining with "northern virulence and pedantry . . . a savour of the worst qualities of the worst Italians of the worst period of Italian decadence." Was he, in truth, of Scotch descent on both sides? His exterior recalled little of his mother's charms, and still less those of the handsome Darnley. His contemporaries doubted. They neither believed that Darnley's jealousy was groundless, nor the modern embellishment that the Italian singer and private secretary's ugly face made any tender feeling on Mary Stuart's side quite impossible. The Scottish Solomon was invariably alluded to by the outspoken, jest-loving Henry IV. of France as "Solomon, the son of David" (Rizzio).

The general enthusiasm which greeted King James on his

accession speedily gave way to a very decided unpopularity. Again and again, upon a score of different points, did he offend English national pride, sense of justice, and decency.

The lively Queen, who romped through the court festivities, and spent her days in dressing herself out for masquerades, had her favourites, much as the King had his. At one time, indeed, the same family served them both. The Queen set her affection on the elder brother, the Earl of Pembroke, and the King bestowed his upon the younger, whom he made Earl of Montgomery and Knight of the Garter. Whether he did not find the harmony of disposition for which he had looked, or whether the impression Montgomery made upon him was displaced by another and stronger, certain it is that no later than 1603 he was already violently infatuated with a youth of twenty, who afterwards became the most powerful man in Great Britain.

This was a young Scot, Robert Carr, who first attracted the King's attention by breaking his leg in a tourney at which James was present. He had as a lad been one of the King's pages at home in Scotland, had since pursued his fortunes in France, and was now in service with Lord Hay. The King gave special orders that he should be nursed at the castle, sent his own doctor to him, visited him frequently during his illness, and made him Knight and Gentleman of the Bedchamber as soon as he was convalescent. He kept him constantly about his person, and even took the trouble to teach him Latin. Step by step the young man was advanced until he stood among the foremost ranks of the country.

It was his nationality which specially offended the people, for Scottish adventurers swarmed about the King, and the Scots were still regarded as stranger-folk in England. The new title of Great Britain had also caused great discontent. Was the glorious name of England no longer to distinguish them? Scotch moneys were made current on English soil, and English ships were compelled to carry the cross of St. Andrew, with that of St. George upon their flags. Englishmen found themselves slighted, and were fearful that the Scot would creep into English lordships and English ladies' beds, as a contemporary writing expresses it. The conflicts in Parliament concerning the extension of national privileges to the Scotch were incessant. Bacon undertook the King's cause, and discreet and biblical objections

were made that things would fall out as they did with Lot and Abraham. Families combined together, or were set at variance among themselves; and it grew to a case of, "Go you to the right? I go to the left."

In 1607 James observed that he intended to "give England the labour and the sweat, Scotland the fruit and the sweet;" and it was a notorious fact, that where his passions were concerned, the Scotch were persistently preferred to the English.

James, having meanwhile found it necessary to provide his favourite with estates, procured them in the following manner. When Raleigh came to grief, he had secured the revenues of his estate, Sherborne, to Lady Raleigh, and his son as heir to it after his death. A few months later the King's lawyers discovered a technical error in the deed of conveyance which rendered it invalid. Raleigh wrote from his prison to Salisbury, entreating the King not to deprive his family of their subsistence for the sake of a copyist's blunder. The King made many promises, and assured Raleigh that a new and correct deed should be drawn up. The imprisoned hero had begun, at about this time, to entertain renewed hope of freedom, for he believed that Christian IV., then on a visit to England, 1606, would intercede for him. But when Lady Raleigh, under this impression, threw herself on her knees before James at Hampton Court, the King passed her by without a word. From the year 1607 the King had resolved upon seizing Sherborne for his favourite. In 1608 Raleigh was required to prove right and title thereunto, and he possessed only the faulty document. At Christmastide, taking her two little sons by the hand, Lady Raleigh cast herself a second time before James, and implored him for a new and accurate deed. The only reply she obtained was a broad Scotch, "I maun hae the lond—I maun hae it for Carr." It is said that the high-spirited woman lost all patience upon this, and springing to her feet called upon God to punish the despoiler of her property. Raleigh, on the 2nd of January 1609, tried the more politic method of writing to Carr, entreating him not to aspire to the possession of Sherborne. He received no answer, and upon the 10th of the same month the estate was handed over to the favourite as a gift. It is to be regretted that Raleigh, who had never concealed his opinion of the King's favourites, should have lowered himself by writing to Carr as "one whom I know not, but by honourable fame."

Lady Raleigh accepted a sum of money in compensation, which bore no relation to the real value of Sherborne, and Raleigh was left in the Tower. It is a highly characteristic feature that he remained there year after year until he succeeded (in 1616) in arousing his kingly gaoler's cupidity afresh. In the hope of his finding the anticipated gold-mines in Guiana his prison doors were opened for a while (1616–17), and his failure to discover them was made a pretext for his execution.[1]

[1] "Sir Walter Raleigh was freed out of the Tower the last week, and goes up and down, seeing sights and places built or bettered since his imprisonment."—Letter from John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, 27th March 1616 ("The Court and Times of James the First").

Gardiner's "History of England," ii. 43; Gosse, "Raleigh," 172.

III

THE KING'S THEOLOGY AND IMPECUNIOSITY—HIS DISPUTES WITH THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

THE King's interest in parsons and theological discussions was not a whit inferior to his passion for his favourites. He constantly gave public expression to a superstition which diverted even contemporary culture. It is jestingly alluded to in a letter from Sir Edward Hoby to Sir Thomas Edmondes, dated Nov. 19, 1605. "His Majesty in his speech observed one principal point, that most of all his best fortunes had happened unto him upon the Tuesday; and particularly he repeated his deliverance from Gowry [the brothers Ruthven] and this [Gunpowder Plot], in which he noted precisely that both fell upon the fifth day of the month: and therefore concluded that he made choice that the next sitting of Parliament might begin upon a Tuesday." If James supported the claims of the clergy, it was less on religious grounds than because his own kingly power was thereby strengthened, and he disseminated, to the best of his ability, the doctrine that all questions must finally be referred to his personal wisdom and insight. Relations between the temporal and the spiritual jurisdictions were already strained. The secular judges frequently objected that the Spiritual Court entered into certain lawsuits before making sure that the case appertained to them. The clergy resisted, asserting that the two courts were independent of one another, and that their spiritual prerogatives emanated direct from the Crown. In 1605 the Archbishop of Canterbury complained of the secular judges to the King, and they, in their turn, appealed to Parliament. Fuller, a member of Parliament, and one of the principal advocates of the Puritan party, defended two of the accused who had been shamefully mishandled by the Spiritual Court (the High Commission), and he denied this "Popish authority," as he called it, any right to impose fines or

inflict imprisonment. For these reckless utterances he was sent to gaol, and kept there until he retracted. The question of the supremacy of temporal jurisdiction over the spiritual began to ferment in the public mind. The King held by the latter, because it exercised an authority which Parliament was powerless to control, while Lord Chief Justice Coke stood by the former. On the latter giving vent, however, to the opinion, in the King's presence, that the sovereign was bound to respect the law of the land, and to remember that spiritual jurisdiction was extraneous, James clenched angry fists in his face, and would have struck him, had not Coke, alarmed, fallen on his knees and entreated pardon.

The King's ardent orthodoxy prompted him next to appear as a theological polemist. A certain professor of theology at Leyden, Conrad Vorstius by name, had, according to James's ideas, been guilty of heresy. It was of so slight a nature that, in spite of the rigid orthodoxy of the greater part of the Dutch theologians, it had raised no protest in Holland, since statesmen, nobles, and merchants were all agreed upon tolerance in matters of religion. James, however, made such a vindictive assault upon them, that, for fear of forfeiting their English alliance, they were compelled to give Vorstius his dismissal.

At the precise moment of James's full polemical heat against Vorstius, two unlucky Englishmen, Edward Wrightman and Bartholomew Legate, were convicted of holding heretical opinions. The latter admitted that he was an Aryan, and had not prayed to Jesus for many years. James was fire and flame. Elizabeth had burnt two heretics. Why shouldn't he? Public opinion saw no cruelty, but merely righteousness in such a proceeding, and they were both accordingly burned alive in March 1612.

It was one of the clerkly James's customs to issue proclamations. Among the first of these was a warning issued against the encroachments of the Jesuits, advising them of a date by which they must have decamped from his kingdom and country. Another very forcibly recommended unanimity of religion—that is to say, complete uniformity of ceremony. A bold priest, Burgess by name, preached a sermon in the King's presence, soon after this, on the insignificance of ceremonies. They resembled, he said, the glass of the Roman Senator, which was not worth a man's life or subsistence. Augustus, having been invited

to a feast by this Senator, was greeted on his arrival by terrible cries. A slave, who had broken some costly glass, was about to be thrown into the fishpond. The Emperor bade them defer the punishment until he had inquired of his host whether he had glass worth a man's life. Upon the Senator answering that he possessed glass worth a province, Augustus asked to see it, and smashing it into fragments, remarked, "Better that it should all perish than that one man should die." "I leave the application to your Majesty."

The proclamations continued undiminished, however, and it became a favourite amusement of James to issue edicts forbidding lawful trades. This was the cause of much discontent, and appeal was made to the Lord Chief Justice. In 1610 two questions were laid before Coke: whether the King could prohibit the erection of new houses in London by proclamation (a naïve notification had been issued with a view to preventing the "over-development" of the capital), or forbid the manufacture of starch (in allusion to a manifesto limiting the uses of wheat to purposes of food). The answer was returned that the King had neither power to create offences by proclamation, nor make trades, which did not legally subject themselves to judicial control, liable to punishment by the Star Chamber. After this ensued a temporary respite from edicts levying fines or threatening imprisonment.

The dissensions between King and People became so violent that they soon led to a complete rupture between James and the House of Commons, which would not submit to his high-handed levying and collecting of taxes in order to squander the money on his own pleasures and caprices. James, who required £500,000 to pay his debts, was made to endure a speech in Parliament concerning the prodigality of himself and favourites. An insulting rumour added that it had been said in the House that the King must pack all the Scots in his household back to the country whence they came. James, losing all patience, prorogued Parliament, and finally dissolved it in February 1611.

This was the beginning of a conflict between the Crown and the People which lasted throughout James's lifetime, causing the Great Revolution under his son, and being only finally extinguished seventy-eight years afterwards by the offer from both Houses of the Crown to William of Orange.

It was to no purpose that the King's revenues were in-

creased year by year, by illegal taxation too: nothing sufficed. In February 1611 he divided £34,000 among six favourites, five of whom were Scotch. In the March of the same year he made Carr Viscount Rochester and a peer of England. For the first time in English history a Scot took his seat in the House of Lords, and a Scot, moreover, who had done his best to inflame the King against the Commons.

To relieve its pecuniary distress the Court hit upon the expedient of selling baronetcies. Every knight or squire possessed of money or estates to the value of a hundred a year could become a baronet, provided he were willing to disburse £1080 (a sum sufficient to support thirty infantry-men in Ireland for three years) in three yearly payments to the State coffers. This contrivance brought no very great relief, however. Either the extravagance was too reckless, or the seekers after titles were not sufficiently numerous.

Things had gone so far in 1614, that, in spite of the hitherto unheard-of sale of Crown property, James was at his wits' end for want of money. He owed £680,000, not to mention a yearly deficit of £200,000. The garrisons in Holland were on the point of mutinying for their pay, and the fleet was in much the same condition. Fortresses were falling into ruins for want of repair, and English Ambassadors abroad were fruitlessly writing home for money. It was once more decided to summon Parliament. In spite of the most shameless packing, however, the Commons came in with a strong Opposition; and they had much to complain of. The King, among other things, had given Lord Harrington the exclusive right of coining copper money, in return for his having lent him £300,000 at his daughter's wedding. He had also granted a monopoly of the manufacture of glass, and had given the sole right of trade with France to a single company.

The Upper House declined to meet the Lower on a common ground of procedure, and when Bishop Neile, one of the greatest sycophants the royal influence possessed in the Lords, permitted himself some offensive strictures on the Commons, such a storm broke loose among the latter that one member (an aristocrat), abused the courtiers as "spaniels" towards the King and "wolves" towards the people, and another went so far as to warn the Scotch favourites that the Sicilian Vespers might find a parallel in England.

James, who, in a lengthy peroration, had attempted to influence the Commons in his favour, saw that he had nothing to hope from them and dissolved Parliament in the following year.

In order to free him from debt, and to contrive, if possible, some means of supplying the sums swallowed up by the Government and Court, a scheme was devised of inducing private citizens to send money to the King, apparently of their own free will. The bishops inaugurated it by offering James their Church plate and other valuables. This example was followed by all who hoped or expected favours from the court; and a great number of people sent money to the Treasury at Whitehall. Thus the idea obtained that James should issue a summons for all England to follow this example. It seemed, at first, as if this self-taxation would bring in a good round sum. The King asked the city for a loan of £100,000, and it replied (very differently to the response it had made to Elizabeth) that they would rather give £10,000 than lend £100,000. In the course of little over a month £34,000 came in, but with that the stream ceased. Government wrote fruitlessly to all the counties and their officials, &c., to renew the summons. The sheriffs unanimously replied that if the King were to summon Parliament he would experience no difficulty in getting money. During two whole months only £500 came in. Fresh appeals were made and renewed pressure attempted without obtaining the desired results.

The luckless Raleigh, who had heard of these things in his prison, but was without adequate information from the outside world, wrote a pamphlet on the prerogatives of Parliament, full of good advice to the King, whom he assumed to be personally guiltless of the abuses his ministers practised in his name. He naïvely looked for his freedom in return for the tract, which naturally was suppressed.

The notorious Peckham case was another cause of popular ill-humour. In the course of this trial, a man who had been greatly exasperated by clerical and official demeanour, and had expressed himself indiscreetly thereon, was subjected to repeated torture on the pretext of a sermon which had never been preached or printed, but which an examination of his house had brought to light. Bacon degraded himself by urging on the executioners at the rack—a form of torture which had been

abolished in common law, but was still considered legitimately applicable in political cases.

That James was personally cruel is shown, amongst other things, by his frequent pardons on the scaffold. He kept such men as Cobham, Grey, and Markham waiting two hours with the axe hanging over their heads, undergoing all the tortures of death, before they were informed that their execution had been deferred. The times, however, were as cruel as he. Through all the published letters of that period runs incessant mention of hanging, racking, breaking on the wheel, half hanging, and executions, without the least emotion being expressed. Any death gave invariable rise to suspicions of poison. Even when the King lost his eldest son, it was stubbornly believed that he had rid himself of him from jealousy of his popularity. As every death was attributed to foul play, so every disease or sickness was assigned to witchcraft. Sorcerers and witches were condemned and despised, but believed in, nevertheless, even by such men as Philip Sidney's friend, Fulk Greville, Lord Brook and Chancellor of the Exchequer under James. He obviously fully credits the witchcraft of which he speaks so disdainfully in his work, "Five Years of King James's Government."

IV

THE CUSTOMS OF THE COURT

THE tone of the Court was vicious throughout. Relations between the sexes were much looser than would have been expected under a king who, in general, troubled himself little about women. We find a description in Sir Dudley Carleton's letters of a bridal adventure, which ended in the King going in night-gear to awaken the bride next morning and remaining with her some time, "in or upon the bed, chuse which you will believe." James spoke of the Queen in public notices as "Our dearest bedfellow." In the half-imbecile, half-obscene correspondence between James and Carr's successor, Buckingham, the latter signs himself, "Your dog," while James addresses him as "Dog Steenie." The King even calls the solemn Cecil, "little beagle;" and the Queen, writing to Buckingham to beg him intercede with the King for Raleigh's life, addresses him as "my kind dog."

With personal dignity, all decency also was set aside. Even the elder Disraeli, James's principal admirer and apologist, acknowledges that the morals of the Court were appalling, and that these courtiers, who passed their days in absolute idleness and preposterous luxury, were stained by infamous vices. He quotes Drayton's lines from the "Mooncalf," descriptive of a lady and gentleman of this circle—

> "He's too much woman, and she's too much man."

Neither does he deny the contemporary Arthur Wilson's account of many young girls of good family, who, reduced to poverty by their parents' luxurious lives, looked upon their beauty as so much capital. They came up to London in order to put themselves up for sale, obtained large pensions for life, and ultimately married prominent and wealthy men. They were considered sensible, well-bred women, and were even looked upon as *esprits*

forts. The conversation of the men was so profligate, that the following sentiment, less decently expressed, must have been frequently heard: "I would rather that one should believe I possessed a lady's favours, though I did not, than really possess them when none knew thereof."

Gondomar, the Spanish envoy, played an important part at the Court of King James. Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, Count of Gondomar, was one of the first diplomatists of Spain. He must have lacked the intuitions of a statesman, in so far as he flattered himself that England could be brought back to Roman Catholicism, but he was a past-master in the art of managing men. He knew how to awe by rare firmness of decision and how to win by exemplary suppleness; he knew when to speak and when to be silent; and, finally, he understood how to further his master's aims by the most intelligent means. He had as free access to James as any English courtier, having acquired it by lively sallies and by talking bad Latin, in order to give the King an opportunity of correcting him.

Ladies of rank crowded on to their balconies to attract this man's attention as he rode or drove to his house; and it appears, says Disraeli, that any one of them would have sold her favours for a good round sum. Noticeable among these ladies of title, says Wilson, were many who owned some pretensions to wit, or had charming daughters or pretty nieces, whose presence attracted many men to their houses. The following anecdote made considerable noise at the time, and has been variously repeated. In Drury Lane, Gondomar, one day, passed the house of a charming widow, a certain Lady Jacob. He saluted her, and was amazed to find that in return to his greeting she merely moved her mouth, which she opened, indeed, to a very great extent. He was profoundly astonished by this lack of courtesy, but reflected that she had probably been overtaken by a fit of the gapes. The same thing occurring, however, on the following day, he sent one of his retinue to inform her that English ladies were usually more gracious than to return his greeting in such an outrageous manner. She replied, that being aware that he had acquired several good graces for a handsome sum, she had wished to prove to him that she also had a mouth which could be stopped in the same fashion. Whereupon he took the hint, and immediately despatched her a present.

In all this, however, the women merely followed the example of the men. The English Ambassador at Madrid had long been aware of, and profited by, the possibility of buying the secrets of the Spanish Government at comparatively reasonable prices. In May 1613, however, he discovered that Spain, in the same manner, annually paid large sums to a whole series of eminent persons in England. He saw, to his disgust, the name of the English Admiral, Sir William Monson, among the pensioners of Spain, and learned, to his consternation, that the late Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Salisbury, had been in her pay up to the moment of his death. In the following December he obtained a complete list of men enjoying Spanish pay, and was thunderstruck on reading the names of men whose integrity he had never doubted, and who were filling the highest offices of state. Not daring to trust the secret to paper, correspondence by no means being considered inviolable in those days, he applied for permission to bring the disgraceful information to James in person.

V

ARABELLA STUART AND WILLIAM SEYMOUR

An event occurring in the royal family (concerning which Gardiner observes that, in our day, such a thing would rouse the wrath of the British people from one end of the kingdom to the other) serves to illustrate both the heartlessness of the King and the lawless condition of the people.

Arabella Stuart, who was King James's cousin, had possessed her own appanage from the time of Queen Elizabeth. She had her apartments in the Palace, and associated with the Queen's ladies. Her letters show a refined and lovable woman's soul, absolutely untroubled by any political ambition. She says in a letter to her uncle Shrewsbury that she wishes to refute the apparent impossibility of a young woman's being able to preserve her purity and innocence among the follies with which a court surrounds her. She is alluding, amongst other things, to one of the eternal masquerades through which the Queen and her ladies racketed, attired, upon this occasion, "as sea nymphs or nereids, to the great delight of all beholders" (Arthur Wilson's "History of Great Britain," 1633). She kept apart as much as possible from this whirl of gaiety, and the various foreign potentates who applied for her hand were all dismissed. She would not, she said, wed a man whom she did not know. Nevertheless it was rumoured that she intended to marry some foreign prince who would enforce her rights to the English throne. James sent her to the Tower at Christmas 1609 on account of this report, and summoned the Council. The misunderstanding was cleared up, and she was hastily set at liberty, James expressly assuring her that he would have no objection to her marrying a subject.

A few weeks after she learned to know and love the man to whom she devoted herself with a passion and fidelity which recalls that of Imogen for Posthumus in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*.

This was young William Seymour, a son of Lord Beauchamp, one of the first noblemen in England. He was received in her apartments, and obtained her promise in February, the King's assurance to Arabella giving them every security for the future. Nevertheless, the young Princess's choice could not have fallen more unfortunately. Lord Beauchamp was the son of the Earl of Hertford and Catherine Grey, the inheritress of the Suffolk rights to the throne. The Earl's eldest son was still alive, and William Seymour had no claim to the crown at the moment; but the fact that his brother might die childless made him an always possible pretender. The Suffolk claims had been recognised by Act of Parliament, and the Parliament which had acknowledged James was powerless to change the succession. In the face of this notorious fact, James ignored the consideration that neither Seymour and Arabella, nor any one else, wanted to deprive him of the throne in favour of the young pair. Both were summoned before the Council and examined.

Seymour was made to renounce all thought of marriage with Arabella, and the young couple did not see each other for three months. In May 1610, however, they were secretly married.

When the news reached James's ears in July, he was furious. Arabella was detained in custody at Lambeth, and Seymour was sent to the Tower.

Arabella strove in vain to touch the King's heart. Great sympathy was felt in London, however, for the young couple, and secret meetings were permitted them by their gaolers. When the correspondence between them was discovered, Arabella was commanded to travel to Durham and put herself under the care of its Bishop. On her refusal to quit her apartments, she was carried away by force. Falling ill on the journey, she was given permission to pause by the way, and, attiring herself like one of Shakespeare's heroines, she seized the opportunity to escape. She drew on a pair of French trousers over her skirt, put on a man's coat and high boots, wore a manly wig with long curls over her hair, set a low-flapped black hat upon her head, threw a short cloak around her, and fastened a small sword at her side. Thus disguised, she fled by horse to Blackwall, where a French ship awaited her and Lord Seymour, the latter having arranged his escape for the same time. An accident prevented their meeting, and Arabella's friends, growing impatient, insisted, in spite

of her protests, on setting out at once. When Seymour arrived next day, he learned to his disappointment, that the ship had set sail. He succeeded, however, in getting put over to Ostend. Meanwhile, Arabella, a few miles from Calais, induced the captain to lay-to for an hour or so to give Seymour an opportunity of overtaking them. They were here surprised by an English cruiser, which had been sent from Dover to capture the fugitives, and Arabella was brought back to the Tower. When she implored pardon, James brutally replied that she had eaten forbidden fruit, and must pay the price of her disobedience. Despair deprived her of her reason, and she died miserably, after five years of imprisonment. Not until after her death was her husband permitted to return to England.

VI

ROCHESTER AND LADY ESSEX

It was Rochester who was the real ruler of England all this time. He was the acknowledged favourite; to him every suitor applied and from him came every reward. He was made head of the Privy Council after the death of Lord Dunbar, and was nominated Lord High Treasurer of Scotland, a title which gave him great prestige in his native country. He was also made Baron Brandspech, and, in accordance with the general expectation, Viscount Rochester and Knight of the Garter. The only decided opposition he had to encounter was that of young Prince Henry, the nation's darling, who could not endure his arrogant way, and was, moreover, his rival in fair ladies' favours. After the death of the Prince, Rochester was more powerful than ever. As principal Secretary, Carr managed all the King's correspondence, and on more than one occasion he answered letters without consulting either King or Council. The King, if he was aware of this, had reached such a pitch of infatuation that he submitted to everything. Carr was given a new title in 1613 and the Viscount Rochester was made Earl of Somerset. In 1614 the King made him Lord Chamberlain "because he loved him better than all men living." In the interim he had been appointed Keeper of the Seals and Warden of the Cinque Ports.

It was from such a height as this that he fell, and the circumstances of his overthrow form perhaps the most interesting events, from a psychological point of view, of James' reign. They made a great impression on contemporary minds, and occupy a large space in the letters of the period—letters in which Shakespeare's name is never mentioned and of whose very existence their historico-polemical writers do not seem to have been aware.

It was one of James's ambitions on his coming to England to put an end to the feuds and dissensions which were rife among

the great families. To this end he arranged a match between Essex's son, and a daughter of the house which had ruined his father and driven him to death. In January 1608, accordingly, the fourteen-year-old Earl was married to the Lady Frances Howard, just thirteen years of age, and he thus became allied with the powerful houses of Howard and Cecil. Mr. Pory wrote to Sir Robert Cotton on the occasion of the marriage, "The bridegroom carried himself as gravely and as gracefully as if he were of his father's age."

The Church in those times sanctioned these marriages between children, but every sense of fitness demanded that they should be immediately parted. Young Essex was sent on foreign travel, and did not return to claim his bride until he was eighteen. He was a solidly built youth, possessed of a heavy and imperturbably calm disposition. Frances, on the other hand, was obstinately and stormily passionate in both her likes and dislikes. She had been brought up by a coarse and covetous mother, and early corrupted by contact with the vices of the Court. She took a deep dislike to her youthful bridegroom from the first and refused to live with him. Her relations, however, compelled her to accompany him to his estate, Chartley.

She had previously attracted the attention of both Prince Henry and the favourite Rochester. Expecting more from Rochester, as a contemporary document explains, than from the unprofitable attentions of the Prince, she chose the former, a fact which can hardly have failed to augment the ill-will already existing between the King's son and the King's friend. From the moment of her choice all the passionate intensity of her nature was concentrated upon avoiding any intercourse with her husband and in assuring Rochester that his jealousy on that score was groundless.

She chose for her confidante a certain Mrs. Turner, a doctor's widow, who, after leading a dissipated life, was settling down to a reputation for witchcraft. Lady Essex begged some potion of her which should chill the Earl's ardour, and this not working to her satisfaction, she wrote the following letter to her priestess, which was later produced at the trial and made public by Fulk Greville:—

"Sweet Turner, as thou hast been hitherto, so art thou all my hopes of good in this world. My Lord is lusty as ever he was, and hath complained to my brother Howard, that hee hath not layne with mee, nor used mee as his wife. This makes me mad,

since of all men I loath him, because he is the only obstacle and hindrance, that I shall never enjoy him whom I love."

Upon the Earl's complaining a second time, the two applied to a Dr. Forman, quack and reputed sorcerer, for some means of causing an aversion (frigidity *quoad hanc*) in the Earl. The mountebank obligingly performed all manner of hocus-pocus with wax dolls, &c., and these in their turn failing, Lady Essex wrote to him :—

"Sweet Father, although I have found you ready at all times to further mee, yet must I still crave your helpe; wherefore I beseech you to remember that you keepe the doores close, and that you still retaine the Lord with mee and his affection towards mee. I have no cause but to be confident in you, though the world be against mee; yet heaven failes mee not; many are the troubles I sustaine, the doggednesse of my Lord, the crossenesse of my enemies, and the subversion of my fortunes, unlesse you by your wisdome doe deliver mee out of the midst of this wildernesse, which I entreat for God's sake. From Chartley.—Your affectionate loving daughter, FRANCES ESSEX."

In the beginning of the year 1613, a woman named Mary Woods accused Lady Essex of attempting to bribe her to poison the Earl. The accusation came to nothing, however, and the Countess soon afterwards tried a new tack. It was now three years since her husband's return from abroad, and if she could succeed in convincing the Court that the marriage had never been consummated there was some chance of its being declared void. Having won her father and her utterly unscrupulous uncle, the powerful Lord Northampton, to her side, she induced the latter, who played Pandarus to this Cressida, to represent the situation to the King. James, loving Rochester as much as ever, and taking a pleasure in completing the happiness of those he loved, lent a willing ear. Northampton and Suffolk both took the matter up warmly, clearly seeing how advantageous an alliance with Carr, whom they had hitherto regarded as an enemy, would be to their plans. A meeting between the relatives of both parties was arranged. It consisted of the Earls of Northampton and Suffolk on Lady Essex's side, and the Earl of Southampton and Lord Knollys on her husband's. Essex, while resolved not to make any declaration which might prove an obstacle to his marrying again, fully conceded that he was not qualified to be this particular

lady's husband. A commission of clergy and lawyers was therefore appointed to inquire into the matter.

A committee was nominated of six midwives and ten God-fearing matrons of rank, who had all borne children, to ascertain if Lady Essex was, as she asserted, a virgin. The lady's modesty insisted upon being closely veiled during the examination, which naturally gave rise to a rumour that another woman had been substituted.

The examination, which terminated in favour of the plaintiff, convinced none but those who had undertaken it, and was the occasion of much coarse-grained jesting.

With considerable impudence, Lady Essex maintained that her husband had been deprived of his manhood by witchcraft; but she was careful not to mention either Dr. Forman or herself as the instigators of this sorcery. Several members of the commission were prepared beforehand to declare the marriage void, it having been made worth their while to fall in with the wishes of the King and his favourite. Archbishop Abbot, however, an independent spirit, insisted from the first that it was utterly improbable that witchcraft could produce the assigned result, and urged that in accommodating the Countess they were establishing a precedent of which any childless wife could take advantage. The votes being equal, Abbot petitioned the King to allow his withdrawal. James, however, appointed two new members, both bishops, instead, and thus made the votes 7 to 5 in favour of "nullity." Abbot, as the result of his protest, became for a while the most popular man in England. Bishop Neile, who had always been despised, sank still lower in the public esteem, and Bishop Bilson of Winchester, of whom better things had been expected, was overwhelmed with ridicule. His son, whom the King knighted in order to reward his father, was acclaimed by general consent, Sir Nullity Bilson.

Throughout his whole career, and in his late relations with Lady Essex, Rochester had been guided by an intimate and capable adviser, Sir Thomas Overbury. He had assisted Rochester in the composition of his love-letters to the Countess, and he knew a great deal too much about the secret meetings, which he had himself arranged, between the lovers at Paternoster Row, Hammersmith, &c. When he learned that Rochester intended to supplement the connection by marriage, he strove by every

means in his power to prevent it. He had been accustomed to dictate to his master in everything, but Rochester had now grown restive, and was resolved, by fair means or foul, on freeing himself from this control. To this end the King was given to understand that it was a common jest that Rochester managed the King, but Overbury ruled Rochester. In order to get rid of him in an honourable manner, he was appointed to some official post abroad. Overbury, however, whose ambition bound him to England, detected that this was but a mild form of banishment, and strove to excuse himself, finally declining outright. This was considered a breach of a subject's duty by James, and, upon the advice of the favourite, Overbury was sent to the Tower. Rochester now began to play a double game, and while assuring the prisoner that he was doing his utmost to obtain his release, he was, in reality, concentrating all his influence upon keeping him where he was. It was necessary to befool Overbury into thinking he had reason to be grateful to him, in case the prisoner should one day be released, and should wish to reveal all that Rochester was most anxious to keep concealed.

It was commanded from the first that Overbury should have no contact whatever with the outside world, an order which speaks for itself. When, however, the Lieutenant of the Tower, Sir William Wood, interpreted these directions so literally that he refused Rochester's own messengers access, it became necessary to replace him by the more amenable Sir Gervase Helwys.

Lady Essex, who was not the woman for half measures, preferred to make certain of Overbury once for all, and was determined that he should never leave the Tower alive. For this purpose she again applied to Mrs. Turner, who was well supplied with means serviceable to the occasion. The first thing necessary was to assure themselves of the man to whose immediate care the prisoner was intrusted. Lady Essex applied to Sir Thomas Monson, Master of the Tower Armoury, and through his influence Helwys was induced to dismiss Overbury's attendant and supply his place with Richard Weston, a former servant of Anne Turner.

This man was instructed by Mrs. Turner to meet Lady Essex at Whitehall, and to receive from her a little phial whose contents were to be mixed with the prisoner's food. Meeting Helwys on his way to Overbury's cell, and supposing him to be initiated into

the secret, Weston consulted him as to the best way of administering the poison. Helwys, horror-stricken, prevailed upon him to throw away the contents of the phial. He was in too much awe of the Howard family to venture an accusation, and Weston at his instigation told Lady Essex that the poison had been duly administered, and that the prisoner's health was failing in consequence. Overbury was, in truth, suffering greatly from the frustration of his hopes of release, and he naïvely requested Rochester to send him an emetic in order that the King, hearing of his sickness, might be moved to compassion. It is not known what kind of medicament Rochester sent, nor whether he was aware of Lady Essex's attempt, but he seems to have played his own hand on this occasion.

On finding that Overbury, in spite of his steadily failing health, still continued to live, Lady Frances renewed her activity. Rochester was sending sweetmeats, jellies, and wines to the prisoner, and Lady Essex mixed poison with all these condiments, quite unconscious of the fact that Helwys, now upon the alert, took care that none of them should reach the prisoner. Losing all patience, she looked round for some more certain means than this poison, which worked with such astonishing and irritating deliberation. Learning that the apothecary Franklin was attending Overbury, she bribed his boy to give the sick man a poisoned injection. This was done, and the prisoner died in the Tower on the following day. Northampton immediately spread about a report that Sir Thomas Overbury had by no means led such a secluded life in the Tower as was generally supposed, but had by his dissolute life there contracted a disease of which he died. The rumour was generally believed, but that some suspicions were entertained can be seen in the letters of the times. John Chamberlain, writing to Sir Dudley Carleton on the 14th October 1613, speaks of Overbury's death as being caused by this disease, "or something worse."

Thus the last obstacle was cleared from the path which led this brilliant pair to the altar. Lady Frances was happy, and much farther removed from any feeling of remorse than Lady Macbeth. The King was full of affection for her, and, in order that she might not be wanting her title of Countess, Rochester was made Earl of Somerset. The wedding was celebrated with inordinate pomp on the 26th December 1613. The bride had the assurance to appear

with maidenly hair unbound upon her shoulders. John Chamberlain, writing to Mrs. Alice Carleton, December 30th, says, "She was married in her hair, and led to the chapel by her bridemen, a Duke of Saxony that is here, and the Earl of Northampton, her great-uncle." The wedding was celebrated in the Chapel Royal, in the same place and by the same bishop who had solemnised the previous marriage. King, Queen, and Archbishop were all present, not to mention those of the nobility who wished to stand well with the King and his favourite, and rich gifts were brought by all. Gondomar, wishing to show himself attentive to so highly favoured a pair, sent them some magnificent jewels. The City of London, the Merchant Adventurers, the East India Company, and the Customs sent each their present of precious metals of great value. Gold, silver, and jewels were showered upon them throughout the first half of January 1614. Bacon, though personally no admirer of Somerset, naturally did not hold back. It is very significantly remarked in a letter from John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, December 23, 1613, "Sir Francis Bacon prepares a masque to honour the marriage, which will stand him in about £2000, and though he have been offered some help by the House, and especially by Mr. Solicitor, Sir Henry Yelverton, who would have sent him £500, yet he would not accept it, but offers them the whole charge with the honour." A few years later it is Bacon who conducts the poisoning case against Rochester.

The day following the wedding the King sent a message to the Lord Mayor, inviting him to arrange a fête for Lord and Lady Somerset. The City vainly endeavoured to excuse itself on the ground of insufficient space, but the King himself suggested a remedy, and it was arranged that the guests should go in procession from Westminster to the City, the gentlemen on horseback and the ladies in carriages. The bride was pleased to consider her carriage suitable to the occasion, but not being satisfied with her horses, she sent to borrow Lord Winwood's. He, replying that it did not beseem so great a lady to borrow, gallantly begged her acceptance of the horses as a gift.

Macaulay has likened this Court to that of Nero, and Swinburne has added that these celebrations recall the bridals of Sporus and Locusta. Chapman had already inscribed to Rochester two of the dedicatory sonnets which accompanied

the last books of his translation of the Iliad, and filled them with absurdly exaggerated praise of the Viscount's "heroic virtues." He now wrote his "Andromeda Liberata" in glorification of the nuptials, and on his being attacked on that score, he retorted with his exceedingly naïve "Defence of Perseus and Andromeda."

Life with Lady Frances could have no beneficial effect upon Somerset's character. Nothing was magnificent enough for him, and he was constantly importing new fashions in order to please his master and his wife. That ingenuously moralising historian, Arthur Wilson, complains bitterly of his appearance, his curled and perfumed locks, smooth shaven face and bare neck, and the golden embroideries lavished upon his attire. His only occupation was to solicit estates and money of the King. The subjects supplied him handsomely, for every petitioner paid tribute to Somerset. How much he received in this manner is uncertain, but he spent not less than £90,000 a year. It may be said to his credit, that he never, as did the later favourites, sought to tamper with the law, and he now and then displayed some generosity, but it was the exactions of his Howard connections which ruined him. The Council's most honourable members, amongst whom was Shakespeare's patron, Pembroke, saw with indignation that he predisposed the King in favour of their rivals.

His successor appeared in 1614. George Villiers, a young, handsome man of lively disposition, was promoted step by step, yet not too hastily, for fear of wounding Somerset's feelings. His presence at Court, however, was exceedingly disagreeable to the latter, who treated his rival with cold insolence, and seized every opportunity of humbling him. Somerset's passionate temper and arrogant disposition soon betrayed him into treating the King with similar superciliousness. He was rebuked by James, and a temporary reconciliation was effected; but how far Carr was from the enjoyment of a clear conscience is shown by his soliciting a general pardon, such as Wolsey had received from Henry VIII., from the King at this time, which was to include every possible offence, not forgetting murder. This, he pointed out to James, was in case his enemies should attempt to destroy him by false accusations after the King's death. James was willing, but Lord Ellesmere refused to apply the great seal to the document in question. The King's wrath was great but unavailing. Ellesmere fell upon his knees, but refused to affix the seal.

Soon after this Somerset experienced the need of this comprehensive absolution which he had failed to secure. The apothecary's boy, who had administered the injection to Overbury, fell dangerously ill at Flushing, and, wishing to ease his burdened soul, confessed the murder to Lord Winwood. Helwys was examined, Weston was examined, and Lord and Lady Somerset were soon implicated in the case. As soon as Somerset heard that he was accused, he quitted the King, with whom he was staying at Royston, and started for London in order to clear himself. The King, by this time, was profoundly weary of his old favourite, and entirely taken up by his new. To give some idea of James's dissimulation, we will quote Sir Anthony Weldon's account, as an eye-witness, of the parting between the King and Somerset. "The Earle when he kissed his hand, the King hung about his neck, slabbering his cheeks, saying, 'For God's sake, when shall I see thee again? On my soul, I shall neither eat nor sleep until you come again.' The Earle told him, on Monday (this being on the Friday). 'For God's sake, let me,' said the King. 'Shall I, shall I;' then lolled about his neck. 'Then, for God's sake, give thy lady this kiss for me.' In the same manner at the stayres' head, at the middle of the stayres, and at the stayres' foot. The Earl was not in his coach when the King used these very words, 'I shall never see his face more.'"

Short work was made of the subordinate culprits. Mrs. Turner, Weston, Helwys, and the apothecary Franklin, were all declared guilty and hanged. The Countess bore testimony to her husband's innocence, and he went to the Tower with the collar of the Garter and the George about his neck. He threatened that if he were brought to trial he would betray secrets which contained an accusation against the King—contemporary letters show that this was understood to mean that he would confess to having poisoned Prince Henry at the King's instigation; but he abandoned this accusation later, and conducted his defence with dignity, denying all complicity in the murder. The Countess was less self-possessed. The judgment hall was filled with spectators, and the Earl of Essex amongst them was seated exactly opposite her. As the accusation was read, she trembled and turned pale, and when Weston's name was reached, she covered her face with her fan. When, according to custom, she was asked if she acknowledged herself guilty,

she could but answer, Yes. She was condemned to death, and to the question whether she had anything further to add, replied that she would say nothing to palliate her guilt, but prayed the King's mercy. Somerset was also unanimously declared guilty.

The King pardoned them both. He could hardly send to the scaffold the man who had so long been his most intimate friend, neither could he well despatch thither the daughter of his Chancellor of the Exchequer. But although Somerset steadily maintained his innocence, both he and his wife were sent to the Tower.

In the letters written at the time of the trial, as much mention is made of Sir George Villiers as of Somerset. The new favourite has been ill for some time, "not without suspicion of smallpox, which if it had fallen out *actum erat de amicitia.* But it proves otherwise, and we say there is much casting about how to make him a great man, and that he shall now be made of the Garter," &c.

He was soon made Cupbearer, Chamberlain, Master of the Horse, Marquis of Buckingham, and Keeper of the Great Seal, and he retained his pernicious influence well into the reign of Charles the First. It is highly characteristic of James that he was now as anxious to procure Villiers Raleigh's old estate, Sherborne, from the imprisoned Somerset as he had been to wrest it from the imprisoned Raleigh for Somerset. He must have regarded it as a lawful "morrowing gift," so inextricably had it become associated with a rising favourite in his mind. Somerset was given to understand that he would obtain a free pardon, together with the restitution of the rest of his properties, if he would secure the now all-powerful Villiers' protection by relinquishing Sherborne in his favour. On his obstinately refusing, he and Lady Somerset were left to languish for six long years in the Tower.[1]

[1] Arthur Wilson: "The History of Great Britain, being the Life and Reign of James the First," 1653. Sir A. Weldon: "A Cat may look upon a King," London, 1652. The author of "Memoirs of Sophia Dorothea": "The Court and Times of James the First, illustrated by Authentic Letters," 2 vols., London, 1848. Fulk Greville: "The Five Years of King James." "Secret History of the Court of James the First," edited by Sir Walter Scott, 2 vols., Edinburgh, 1811. "An Inquiry into the Literary and Political Character of James the First," by the author of "Curiosities of Literature," London, 1816. Samuel R. Gardiner: "History of England from the Accession of James I. to the Outbreak of the Civil War," vol. ii., London, 1883. Edmond Gosse: "Raleigh," London, 1886. "The Court and Character of King James, Written and taken by Sir A. W(eldon), being an Eye and Ear Witness," London, 1650. Aulicus Coquinariæ: "A Vindication in Answer to a Pamphlet entitled 'The Court and Character of King James,'" London, 1650.

VII

CONTEMPT OF WOMEN—TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

In order to give a complete picture, it was necessary to trace events down to the years in which external happenings ceased to work upon Shakespeare's mind. He died in the same year that the Lady Arabella perished in the Tower, and when the scandal of the Somerset trial was beginning to fade from the public mind. It is obviously impossible to point to any one cause which could have made an especially deep impression on his inner life. All we can say with certainty is, that the general atmosphere of the times, of the corrupt condition of morals here described, could hardly fail to leave some mark on a disposition which, just at this time, was susceptible and irritable to the highest degree. If, as we maintain, there now ensued a period during which his melancholy was prone to dwell upon the darkest side of life; if he shows, in these years, a sickly tendency to imbibe poison from everything; and if all his observation and experience seem to result in a contempt of mankind, so did the general condition of society afford ample nourishment for the mood of scorn for human nature.

In the merely external, Shakespeare's life cannot at this time have undergone any great catastrophe. He was now (1607) forty-three years of age. As soon as the play was over, between five and six of an afternoon, he stepped into one of the Thames boats and was set across the river to his house, where his books and work awaited him. He studied much, making himself familiar with the works of his cotemporaries, plunging anew into Plutarch, reading Chaucer and Gower, and pondering over More's *Utopia*. He worked as hard as ever. Neither the rehearsal in the morning nor the play at mid-day had power to weary him. He read through old dramatic manuscripts to see if new treatment could revive them into use, and returned to long-laid-by manuscripts of his own to work upon them afresh.

He attended to business at the same time, received the rents

of his houses at Stratford, collected his tithes from the same place, and watched the lawsuits in which the purchase of these tithes had involved him. He had obtained the object of his existence, so far as the possession of property was concerned; but never had he been so downcast and dispirited, never had he felt so keenly the emptiness of life.

So long as Shakespeare was young, the general condition of society and the ways and worth of men had troubled him less. Then, except for the feeling of belonging to a despised caste and the increasing spread of Puritanism, he was at peace with his surroundings. Now he saw more sharply the true outlines of his times and his world, and perceived more clearly that eternal infirmity of human nature, which at all times only waits for a propitious climate in order to develop itself.

The last work which had lain ready on his table was *Antony and Cleopatra.* He had there, for the second time, given his impression of the subversion of a world.

There was a pendant to this war of the East (which was in reality waged for Cleopatra's sake), a war fought by all the countries of the Mediterranean for the possession of a loose woman; the most famous of all wars, the old Trojan war, set going by a "cuckold and carried on for a whore," so it will shortly be described by a scandalous buffoon, whom Shakespeare uses, so to speak, in his own name. Here was stuff for a tragicomedy of right bitter sort.

From childhood he, and every one else, had been filled with the fame and glory of this war. All its heroes were models of bravery, magnanimity, wisdom, friendship, and fidélity, as if such things existed! For the first time in his life he feels a desire to mock—to shout "Bah!" straight out of his heart—to turn the wrong side out, the true side.

Menelaus and Helen—what a ridiculous couple! The wretched head of horned cattle moves heaven and earth, causes thousands of men to be slain, and all that he may have his damaged beauty back again.[1] Menelaus stood too low for his satire, however. Shakespeare himself had never felt thus. Neither was it in his

[1] Heine, some hundreds of years later, expresses the same feeling in his

"O König Wiswamatra,
O welch ein Ochs bist du,
Dass du so viel kämpfest und brüssest
Und Alles für eine Kuh!"

humour to portray a woman who, like Helen, had openly left one man for another, a husband for a lover—there was none of woman's special duplicity in that. The transfer from one to another, which alone was of interest to him, in her case was already past and gone. Helen's destiny is settled before the drama begins. There is no play, no inner variety in her character, no dramatic situation between her in Troy and Menelaus without.

But in the old legends of Troy which sagas and folk-tales had handed down to him, he found, in miniature, the plot whereon the whole war turned. Cressida, a rejuvenated Helen; Troilus, the simpleton who loved her, and whom she betrayed; and round about them grouped all those archetypes of subtlety, wisdom, and strength—that venerable old twaddler Nestor, and that sly fox Ulysses, &c. Here was something which urged him on to representation. Here was a plot which chimed in with his mood.

Shakespeare had no interest in delineating that *bellâtre*, Prince Paris; he had felt him as little as he had Menelaus. But he had many a time felt as Troilus did—the honest soul, the honourable fool, who was simple enough to believe in a woman's constancy. And he knew well, too well, that Lady Cressida, with the alluring ways, the nimble wit, the warm blood, speaking lawful passion with (to not too true an ear) the lawful modesty of speech. She would rather be desired than confer, would rather be loved than love, says "yes" with a "no" yet upon her lips, and flames up at the least suspicion of her truth. Not that she is false. Oh, no! why false? We believe in her as her lover believes in her, and as she believes in herself—until she leaves him for the Greek camp. Then she has scarcely turned her back upon him than she loses her heart to the first she meets, and her constancy fails at the first proof to which it is put.

All his life through these two forms had preoccupied his imagination. In *Lucretia*, he coupled Troilus with Hector among Trojan heroes. In the fourth act of the *Merchant of Venice*, he made Lorenzo say:

> "In such a night
> Troilus, methinks, mounted the Trojan walls,
> And sighed his soul towards the Grecian tents
> Where Cressid lay."

In *Henry V.*, Pistol included Doll Tearsheet among "Cressid's kind," making Doll doubly ridiculous by classing her with the

Trojan maid of far-famed charm. In *Much Ado About Nothing*, (Act v.), Benedict called Troilus "the first employer of Pandars." In *As You Like It* (Act iv.), Rosalind jested about him, and yet yielded him a certain recognition. Protesting that no man ever yet died for love, she said, "Troilus had his brains dashed out with a Grecian club, yet did what he could to die before, *and he is one of the patterns of love.*" In *Twelfth Night* and in *All's Well that Ends Well*, the Fool and Lafeu both jested about Pandarus and his ill-famed zeal in bringing Troilus and Cressida together.

Slowly, like the Hamlet tradition, this subject had been growing ripe in Shakespeare's mind. It had hitherto lived in his imagination in much the same form in which it had been handled by his compatriots. By Chaucer, first and foremost, who in his *Troilus and Cressida* (about 1360) had translated, elaborated, and enlarged Boccaccio's beautiful poem, *Filostrato*. But neither Chaucer nor any other Englishman who had translated or reproduced the subject (such as Lydgate, 1460, who restored Guido delle Columne's *Historia Trojana*, or Caxton, who in 1471 published a translation of Raoul le Fevre's *Recueil des Histoires de Troyes*) had found in it any material for satire. Especially had none of its earlier elaborators found any fault with the character of Cressida. Not the poets once. Chaucer founded his heroine in all essentials upon Boccaccio's. He, who was the first to gather the material into a poetic whole, had no intention of presenting his heroine in an unfavourable light. He wished to give expression, as he openly declares, to his own devotion to his lady-love in his description of Troilus's passion for Cressida. The old Trouvère, Benoit de St. Maure, and his *Histoire de la Guerre de Troie* (about 1160), was undoubtedly his model. It is from him he received the impression that Griseida (into whom he transforms Benoit's Briseida) gradually falls a victim to the seductions of Diomedes, in whose company she leaves Troy, and little by little grows untrue to Troilus. He adds a stanza to this effect, on the inconstancy of women.[1] It was not to be expected that

[1] "Giovine donna è mobile, e vogliosa
E negli amanti molti, e sua bellezza
Estima più che allo specchio, e pomposa
Ha vanagloria di sua giovinezza;
La qual quanto piacevole e vezzosa
E più, cotanto più seco l'apprezza
Virtù non sente, nè conoscimento,
Volubil sempre come foglia al vento."

Boccaccio should kneel before women with the platonic love and devout worship of Dante and Petrarch. Beatrice is a mystical, Laura an earthly ideal. Griseida is a young lady from the Court of Naples, such as it was then. A young, lovable, and frail woman of flesh and blood. But only frail, never base, and very far from being a coquette. Boccaccio never forgets that he has dedicated the poem to his love and that she also left the place where they had dwelt together, for one where he durst not follow her. He says clearly that in the portrayal of Griseida's charms he has drawn a picture of his love, but he refrains with consummate tact from driving the comparison further.

Chaucer, as little as Boccaccio, found anything in the relations of the lovers to satirise. He intends, to the best of his abilities, to prove their love as innocent and lawful as possible. He paints it with a naïve and enraptured simplicity, which proves how far he is from mockery.[1] He does not even rave over Cressida's faithlessness to Troilus; she is excused, she trembles and hesitates before she falls. Inconstancy is forced upon her by the overwhelming might of hard circumstance.

There is nothing in these two poets that can compare with the passionate heat and hatred, the boundless bitterness with which Shakespeare delineates and pursues his Cressida. His mood is the more remarkable that he in no wise paints her as unlovable or corrupt; she is merely a shallow, frivolous, sensual, pleasure-loving coquette.

She does little, on the whole, to call for such severity of judgment. She is a mere child and beginner in comparison with Cleopatra, for instance, who, for all that, is not so unmercifully condemned. But Shakespeare has aggravated and pointed every circumstance until Cressida becomes odious, and rouses only aversion. The change from love to treachery, from Troilus to Diomedes, is in no earlier poet effected with such rapidity. Whenever Shakespeare expresses by the mouth of one or another of his characters the estimate in which he intends his audience to hold her, one is astounded by the bitterness of the hatred he

[1] "Her armes smale, her streghte bak and softe,
Her sides long, fleshly, smothe, and white,
He gan to stroke; and good thrift bad ful oft.
Her snowish throte, her brestes round and lite:
Thus in this hevene he gan him to delite,
And then withal a thousand times her kiste
That what to dou for joie unnethe he wiste."

discloses. It is especially noticeable in the scene (Act iv.) in which Cressida comes to the Greek camp and is greeted by the kings with a kiss.

At this point Cressida has as yet offended in nothing. She has, out of pure, vehement love for him, passed such a night with Troilus as Juliet did with Romeo, persuaded to it by Pandarus, as Juliet was by her nurse. Now she accepts and returns the kiss wherewith the Greek chieftains bid her welcome. We may remark, in parenthesis, that at that time there was no impropriety in such a greeting. In William Brenchley Rye's "England as seen by Foreigners in the Days of Elizabeth and James the First," are found, under the heading "England and Englishmen," the following notes by Samuel Riechel, a merchant from Ulm:—"Item, when a foreigner or an inhabitant goes to a citizen's house on business, or is invited as a guest, and having entered therein, he is received by the master of the house, the lady, or the daughter, and by them welcomed; he has even the right to take them by the arm and kiss them, which is the custom of the country; and if any one does not do so, it is regarded and imputed as ignorance and ill-breeding on his part."

For all that, Ulysses, who sees through her at the first glance, breaks out on occasion of this kiss which Cressida returns:

> "Fie, fie upon her,
> There's language in her eye, her cheek, her lips,
> Nay, her foot speaks, her wanton spirit looks out
> At every joint and motive of her body.
> Oh, these encounterers, so glib of tongue,
> That give occasion welcome ere it comes,
> And wide unclasp the tables of their thoughts
> To every ticklish reader! Set them down
> For sluttish spoils of opportunity,
> And daughters of the game."

So Shakespeare causes his heroine to be described, and doubtless it is his own last word about her. Immediately before her he had portrayed Cleopatra. When we remember the position occupied in his drama by the Egyptian queen, whom he, for all that, has stamped as the most dangerous of all dangerous coquettes, we can only marvel at the distance his spiritual nature has traversed since then.

There was in Shakespeare's disposition, as we have already remarked, a deep and extraordinary tendency to submissive admiration and worship. Many of his flowing lyrics spring from this source. Recall his humility of attitude before the objects of this admiration, before Henry V., for example, and his adoration for the friend in the Sonnets. We still find this need of giving lyrical and ecstatic expression to his hero-worship in *Antony and Cleopatra.* He by no means undertakes a defence of the desolating temptress, but with what glamour he surrounds her! What eulogies he lavishes upon her! She stands in an aureole of the adulation of all the other characters in the drama. At the time Shakespeare wrote this great tragedy, he had still so much of romantic enthusiasm remaining to him that he found it natural to let her live and die gloriously. Let be that she was a sorceress, still she fascinates.

What a change! Shakespeare, who had hitherto worshipped women, has become a misogamist. This mood, forgotten since his early youth, rises up again in hundredfold strength, and his very soul overflows in scorn for the sex.

What is the cause? Has anything befallen him—anything new? Upon what and whom does he think? Does he speak out of new and recent experience, or is it the old sorrow from the time of the Sonnets, of which he made use in the construction of Cleopatra's character, and is this the same grief which has taken new shape in his mind and is turning sour? is it this which has grown increasingly bitter until it corrodes?

There are two types of artist soul. There is the one which needs many varying experiences and constantly changing models, and which instantly gives a poetic form to every fresh incident. There is the other which requires amazingly few outside elements to fertilise it, and for which a single life circumstance, inscribed with sufficient force, can furnish a whole wealth of ever-changing thought and modes of expression. Sören Kierkegaard among writers, and Max Klinger among painters, are both great examples of the latter type.

To which did Shakespeare belong? His many-sidedness and fertility is incontrovertible, and every particular points to the use of a multiplicity of models. But for all that, his groups of feminine characters can frequently be traced back to an original type, and therefore, most likely, to a single model. When one momentous

incident of a poet's life is known, we are very apt to relate to it everything in his works which could possibly have any connection with it. In this manner the French literary and critical world most obstinately found traces of Alfred de Musset's life with George Sand in every expression of melancholy or complaint of desolation in his poems. In his biography of his brother, however, Paul de Musset has revealed the fact that the "December Night," which seems so obvious a supplement to the "May Night" that turns upon George Sand, was really written in quite another spirit, to a totally different woman. Also, the character delineated in the "Letter to Lamartine," which was generally believed to be that of the famous poetess, had in reality nothing whatever to do with her.

It is quite possible, therefore, that this last woman's character, instead of being only a variant of the Cleopatra type, was a product of a new, fiery, and scorching impression of feminine inconstancy and worthlessness. We are too entirely ignorant of the circumstances of the poet's life to venture any decided opinion, all we can say is, that incidents and novel experiences are not absolutely necessary as an explanation. There is a remote possibility that the first sketch of the play was already written in 1603, in which case it would be more than likely that the dark lady was once more his prototype. On the other hand, it may be, as already suggested, that in a productive soul one circumstance will take the place of many, and an experience which at first seemed wholly tragic may, in the rapid inner development of genius, come to wholly change its character. He has suffered under it; it has sucked his heart's blood and left him a beaten man on his path through life. He has sought to embody it in serious and worthy forms, until suddenly it stands before him as a burlesque. His misery no longer seems a cruel destiny, but a well-merited punishment for immoderate stupidity, and this bitter mood has sought relief in such scornful laughter as that whose discord strikes so harshly in *Troilus and Cressida.*

We can imagine that Shakespeare began by worshipping his lady-love, complaining of her coldness and hardness, celebrating her fingers in song, cursing her faithlessness, and feeling himself driven nearly wild with grief at the false position in which she had placed him; this is the standpoint of the Sonnets. In

the course of years the fever had stormed itself out, but the memory of the enchantment was still visibly fresh, and his mind pictured the loved one as a marvellous phenomenon, half queen, half gipsy, alluring and repellant, true and false, strong and weak, a siren and a mystery; this is the standpoint of *Antony and Cleopatra.* Then, possibly, when life had sobered him down, when he had cooled, as we all do cool in the hardening ice of experience, he suddenly and sharply realised the insanity of an exotic enthusiasm for so worthless an object. He looks upon this condition, which invariably begins with self-deception and must of necessity end in disillusionment, as a disgraceful and tremendous absurdity; and his wrath over wasted feelings and wasted time and suffering, over the degradation and humiliation of its self-deception, and ultimately the treason itself, seeks final and supreme relief in the outburst, "What a farce!" which is in itself the germ of *Troilus and Cressida.*

VIII

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA—THE HISTORICAL MATERIAL.

In the twenty-fourth book of the Iliad Homer makes his solitary mention of Troilus as a son whom Priam had lost before the opening of the poem. The old King says:

> "O me, accursed man,
> All my good sons are gone, my light the shades Cimmerian
> Have swallowed from me. I have lost Mestor, surnamed the Fair,
> Troilus, that ready knight at arms, that made his field repair
> Ever so prompt and joyfully."

This is all the great old world poet says of the king's son, whose fame in the Middle Ages outshone Hector's own. This brief mention of an early death stirred the imagination and set fancy at work. The cyclic poets expanded the hint and developed Troilus into a handsome youth who fell by Achilles' lance. It had become the custom under Imperial Rome to derive the empire from the Trojans, and the theory gave birth to many fabrications, professing to emanate from eye-witnesses of the war.

Yet it was not before the time of Constantine the Great, that a description was given which quite displaced Homer during the Middle Ages. This was Dictys Cretensis' book, *De Bello Trojano*, translated from the original Greek into Latin. The translator, a certain Quintus Septimius, informs us that Dictys was a brother in arms of Idomeneus, and at his prince's suggestion wrote this book in Phœnician characters, and afterwards caused it to be buried with him. An earthquake in the time of Nero brought it to light. The translator is evidently simple enough to believe in the truth of this account. A more daring forgery was issued about 635, after the fall of the Western Empire of Rome. The author is supposed to be a certain Dares

Phrygius, who was one of Hector's counsellors, and who wrote the Iliad before Homer. The title of this book also is *De Bello Trojano*, and it professes to have been translated into Latin by Cornelius Nepos, who is said to have found the manuscript at Athens, "where, in his day, Homer was considered half mad" because he had depicted gods and men as carrying on a war with one another. Troilus is the most prominent hero of the book, which is a wretched compilation of far-fetched reminiscences.

Dares, however, became the fountain-head for all mediæval storytellers, first and foremost among them being Benoit de St. Maure, troubadour to Henry II. of England. Of his poem, containing 30,000 verses, only fragments have ever been printed. As a genuine Trouvère of the early half of the twelfth century, he has adorned his ancient material with sumptuous descriptions of towns, palaces, and accoutrements. He enters, so far as he is able, into the spiritual life of his hero, and supplies him with what, according to the notions of his times, he could not possibly lack—a love motive. He represents Briseis, Achilles' vaunted love, as the daughter of Kalchas, whom, following the example of Dares, he makes a Trojan. Briseida, who is beloved by Troilus, returns to Troy after her father goes over to the Greeks. When Kalchas wishes to regain his daughter, she is exchanged, as in Shakespeare's drama, for the prisoner Antenor. Diomedes is sent by the Greeks to escort her, and Briseida falls a victim to his seductive arts. Many of the incidents in Shakespeare's play are to be found in Benoit—that Diomedes is experienced in women, for example; that Briseis gives him a favour wherewith to adorn his lance; that he dismounts Troilus and sends his horse to his lady-love, and that Troilus inveighs against her broken faith, &c.

Now it can be traced how, in the further development of the theme, one writer after another adds some feature which Shakespeare in his turn still further elaborates. Guido de Colonna (or delle Columne), a judge at Messina in 1287, retranslates Benoit de St. Maure into barbarous Latin, making no acknowledgment of his source, and transforming Achilles into a raw, bloodthirsty barbarian.

Boccaccio, who prefers significant names, and the title of whose poem, *Filostrato*, signifies "one struck to earth by love," changes Briseida into Cryseida (thus in old editions), in order that her name may mean "the golden," and he it is who adds

Pandarus, the "all-giver," who aids Troilus in his love affairs. He is Cryseida's kinsman and is evidently sympathetic all through.[1]

It is Chaucer who first submits the character of Pandarus to an important change, and makes it the transition point of the Pandarus we find in Shakespeare. In his poem Troilus's young friend has become the elderly kinsman of Creseyde, and he brings the young pair together, mostly out of looseness. It is he who persuades the young maiden and leads her astray by means of lying impostures. It was not Chaucer's intention, as it was Shakespeare's, to make the old fellow odious. His *rôle* is not carried out with the cynical and repulsive lowness of Shakespeare's character. Chaucer endeavours to ward off any painful impression by making the shameless old rascal the wit of his poem. He did not achieve his object; his readers saw only the procurer in Pandarus, whose name became thenceforward a by-word in the English language, and it was as such that Shakespeare drew the character in downright, unmistakable disgust.[2]

We have yet other sources, Latin, French, and English, for the details of the drama. From Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, for example (which Shakespeare must have known from childhood), he took the idea of making Ajax almost an idiot in his conceited stupidity. It is in the third book of the *Metamorphoses* that Ulysses, fighting with Ajax for Achilles' weapon, overwhelms his opponent with biting sarcasms.[3] Shakespeare found the name of Thersites in the same book, with a word concerning his *rôle* as lampooner of princes.

We may doubt whether Shakespeare knew Lydgate's *Book of*

[1] Troilus says to him :

"Non m'hai piccola cosa tu donata
Ne me a piccola cosa donato hai
La vita mia ti fia sempre obligata
In l'hai da morte in via suscitata."

[2] *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Shakespearegesellschaft*, iii. 252, andvi. 169. Francesco de Sanctis: *Historia della letterature italiana*, i. 308.

[3] "Huic modo ne prosit, quod, uti est, hebes esse, videtur.
Artis opus tantæ rudis et sine pectore miles
Indueret?
Ajacis stolidi Danais Sollertia prosit
Tu vires sine mente geris, mihi cura futuri
Tu pugnare potes, pugnandi tempora mecum
Eligit Atrides. In tantum corpore prodes."

Met. xiii. 135, 290, 327, 360.

Troy. Most of his details with regard to the siege are taken from an old writing translated from the French and published by Wynkyn de Worde in 1503. Here, for example, is the parade of heroes, the talk of King Neoptolemus being no son of Achilles, and the corrupted names of the six gates of Troy—Dardane, Timbria, Helias, Chetas, Troyen, and Antenorides. Here also he would find the name of Hector's horse, Galathea, the archer who calls upon the Greeks, the bastard Margarelon, Cassandra's warning to Hector, the glove Cressida gives away, and Troilus's idea that a man is not called upon to be merciful in war, but should take a victory as he may.[1]

We cannot tell if Shakespeare was further indebted to some old dramatic writings, whereof only the names have survived to us. In 1515, a "Komedy" called the *Story of Troylus and Pandor* was played before Henry VIII. On New Year's Day, 1572, a play about Ajax and Ulisses was performed at Windsor Castle, and another in 1584 concerning Agamemnon and Ulisses.[2] In Henslowe's Daybook for April and May 1599 we see that the poets Dekker and Henry Chettle (Dickers and Harey Cheattel, in his amusing orthography) wrote a piece, at his invitation, for the Lord Admiral's troupe, *Troeyles and creasse-day*. In May he lends them a sum of money on it, changing its title to *A tragedy about Agamemnon*. It is finally entered at the Stationers' Hall in February 1603 as a piece entitled *Troilus and Cresseda*, "as it was played by the Lord Chamberlain's men"[3] (Shakespeare's company). The fact that in Shakespeare's drama, as we have it, rhyme is introduced in various parts of the dialogue, and several other details of versification, seems to point to the possibility that the so-called piece was in reality Shakespeare's first sketch of the play. It is one of Fleay's tediously worked out theories that the drama was produced in three different parts, with an interval of from twelve to thirteen years between each.

[1] Halliwell-Phillips: *Memoranda on Troilus and Cressida*. 1880. (Only twenty copies.)

[2] "Ajax and Ulisses shoven on New Yeares day at nighte by the children of Wynsor.—The history of Agamemnon and Ulisses presented and enacted before her Majestie by the Earle of Oxenford his boyes on St. Johns daie at night at Grenewiche, 1584."

[3] "Entred for his (Master Robertes') copie in full court holden this day to print when he hath gotten sufficient aucthority for yt the Booke of Troilus and Cresseda, as it is acted by my Lord Chamberlen's men."

He is quite regardless of the fact that the parts are absolutely inseparable, and is evidently entirely innocent of the manner of growth of poems. He also totally ignores such important evidence as that of the preface to the oldest edition, 1609, which positively asserts that the piece has never hitherto been played. It is, of course, possible that this edition, like most of its kind, was unauthorised, but even then the writer of the preface would scarcely lie about a fact which could be so easily verified, and which, moreover, he was not in the least interested in falsifying.

IX

SHAKESPEARE AND CHAPMAN—SHAKESPEARE AND HOMER

WE have now apparently exhausted the literary sources of this mysterious and so little understood work. But we have not, for all that, solved the fundamental question which has occupied so many brains and pens. Was it Shakespeare's intention to ridicule Homer? Did he know Homer?

To a Dane, *Troilus and Cressida* recalls the mockery Holberg's *Ulysses von Ithacia* makes of the Homeric material, just as the *Ulysses* reminds us of Shakespeare's play. *Troilus and Cressida* seems to have represented to the English poet much what Holberg's play did to him, a satire, namely, on the absurdities the Gothic and Anglo-Saxon understanding (*i.e.* narrow-mindedness) found in Homer. It is sufficiently remarkable that Shakespeare should have written a travesty which could, in spite of many reservations, be classed with *Ulysses von Ithacia.* As far as Holberg is concerned, the explanation is simple enough. His is the taste of the enlightened age, and the ancient civilisation's noble naïveté viewed in the light of dry rationalism, filled him with amazement and laughter. But what has Shakespeare to do with rationalism? His was the very time of the renaissance of that old world civilisation, the moment of its resurrection. How came he to scorn it?

The general working of the public mind towards the ancient Greeks had prompted Elizabeth to write a commentary on Plato and to translate the Dialogues of Socrates; but Shakespeare's knowledge of Greek was defective, and thus it was that he, as playwright, represented the popular trend, in contradistinction to the numerous other poets, who, like Ben Jonson, prided themselves on their erudition.

Moreover, like the Romans, and subsequently the Italians and

French, the Englishmen of his day believed themselves to be descended from those ancient Trojans, whom Virgil, as true Roman, had glorified at the expense of the Greeks. The England of Shakespeare's time took a pride in her Trojan forefathers, and we find evidence in other of his works that he, as English patriot, sided with the Trojans in the old battles of Ilion, and was, consequently, prejudiced against the Greek heroes. In my opinion, however, all this has little to do with the point at issue. We have already found it probable that Chapman was the poet whose intimacy with Pembroke roused Shakespeare's jealousy, making him feel slighted and neglected, and causing him so much melancholy suffering. I am not ignorant of the arguments which have been brought forward in support of the theory that the rival poet was not Chapman but Daniel, nor of what Miss Charlotte Stopes and G. A. Leigh have to say on the subject of Minto and Tyler.[1] I do not, however, consider that they have been able to refute the strong evidence in favour of its being no other than Chapman who was the poet of Shakespeare's Sonnets 78–86.

In the year 1598 Chapman had just published the first seven books of his *Iliad*, namely, the first, second, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, and eleventh of Homer. The remaining books, followed by a complete *Odyssey*, were not published until 1611, two years after the first appearance of *Troilus and Cressida*. To render the comparatively unknown Homer into good English verse was an achievement worthy of the acknowledgments Chapman received. His translation is to this day, in spite of its faults, the best that England possesses. Keats himself has written a sonnet in praise of it.

How great a reputation Chapman enjoyed as a dramatist may be seen in the dedication of John Webster's tragedy *The White Divel* (1612), at the close of which he says: "Detraction is the sworn friend to ignorance. For mine owne part, I have ever truly cherisht my good opinion of other men's worthy labours, especially of that full and haightened stile of Maister Chapman. The labour'd and understanding workes of Maister Johnson: The no less worthy composures of the both worthy and excellent Maister Beamont and Maister Fletcher: and lastly (without wrong last to be named), the right happy and copious industry of Mr. Shake-

[1] *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Shakespearegesellschaft*, xxv. p. 196; *Westminster Review*, Feb. 1897.

speare, Mr. Decker and Mr. Heywood." As will have been noticed, Chapman's name heads the list, while Shakespeare's comes at the bottom in conjunction with such insignificant men as Decker and Heywood!

Nevertheless (or possibly on that account) there is little doubt that Shakespeare found Chapman personally antipathetic. His style was unequalled for arrogance and pedantry; he was insufferably vain of his learning, and not a whit less conceited of the divine inspiration he, as poet, must necessarily possess. Even the most ardent of his modern admirers admits that his own poems are both grotesque and wearisome, and Shakespeare must certainly have suffered under the miserable conclusion Chapman added to Marlowe's beautiful *Hero and Leander*, a poem that Shakespeare himself so greatly admired. Take only the fragment of introductory prose which prefaces his translation of Homer, and try to wade through it. Short as it is, it is impossible. Read but the confused garrulity and impossible imagery of the dedication in 1598, and could a more shocking collection of mediæval philology be found outside the two pages he writes about Homer?

Swinburne, who loves him, says of his style: "Demosthenes, according to report, taught himself to speak with pebbles in his mouth; but it is presumable that he also learnt to dispense with their aid before he stood up against Æschines or Hyperides on any great occasion of public oratory. Our philosophic poet, on the other hand, before addressing such audience as he may find, is careful always to fill his mouth till the jaws are stretched well-nigh to bursting with the largest, roughest, and most angular of polygonal flintstones that can be hewn or dug out of the mine of language; and as fast as one voluminous sentence or unwieldy paragraph has emptied his mouth of the first batch of barbarisms, he is no less careful to refill it before proceeding to a fresh delivery."[1] The comparison is strikingly exact.

It is this incomprehensible style which made Chapman's readers so few in number, and caused his frequent complaints of being slighted and neglected. As Swinburne jestingly says of him:

> "We understand a fury in his words,
> But not his words."

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[1] A. C. Swinburne: *Essay on Chapman.*

Even in his fine translation of Homer, he is unable to forego his tendency to obscurity, and constrained and inflated expression. It is universally admitted that even a translation must take some colouring from its translator, and no man in England was less Hellenic than Chapman. Swinburne has rightly observed that his temperament was more Icelandic than Greek, that he handled the sacred vessels of Greek art with the substantial grasp of the barbarian, and when he would reproduce Homer he gave rather the stride of a giant than the step of a god.

In all probability it was the grief Shakespeare felt at seeing Chapman selected by Pembroke, added to the ill-humour caused by the elder poet's arrogance and clumsy pedantry, which goaded him into wanton opposition to the inevitable enthusiasm for the Homeric world and its heroes.

And so he gave his bitter mood full play.

He touches upon the *Iliad's* most beautiful and most powerful elements, Achilles' wrath, the friendship between Achilles and Patroclus, the question of Helen being delivered to the Greeks, the attempt to goad Achilles into renewing the conflict, Hector and Andromache's farewell, and Hector's death, but only to profane and ridicule all.

It was a curious coincidence that Shakespeare should lay hands on this material just at the most despondent period of his life; for nowhere could we well receive a deeper impression of modern crudeness and decadence, and never could we meet with a fuller expression of German-Gothic innate barbarism in relation to Hellenism than when we see this great poet of the Northern Renaissance make free with the poetry of the old world.

Let us recall, for instance, the friendship, the brotherhood, existing between Achilles and Patroclus as it is drawn by Homer, and then see what an abomination Shakespeare, under the influence of his own times, makes of it.[1] He causes Thersites to

[1] "*Patroclus.* No more words, Thersites; peace!

"*Thersites.* I will hold my peace when Achilles' brach bids me, shall I?" (Act ii. sc. 1.)

"*Thersites.* Prithee, be silent, boy; I profit not by thy talk: thou art thought to be Achilles' male varlet.

"*Patroclus.* Male varlet, you rogue! What's that?

"*Thersites.* Why, his masculine whore. Now the rotten diseases of the South, the guts-griping, ruptures, catarrhs, loads o' gravel i' the back, lethargies, cold palsies, raw eyes, dirt rotten livers, wheezing lungs, bladders full of impostume, sciaticas, lime-kilns i' the palm, incurable bone-ache, and the rivalled fee-simple of the tetter, take and take again all such preposterous discoveries." (Act v. sc. 1.)

spit upon the connection, and by not allowing any one to protest, so full of loathing for humanity has he become, leaves us to suppose his version to be correct.

How refined and Greek is Homer's treatment of Helen's position. There is no hint there of the modern ridicule of Menelaus; he is equally worthy, equally "beloved by the gods," and still the same mighty hero, if his wife has been abducted. Nor is there any scorn for Helen, only worship for her marvellous beauty, which even the old men upon the walls turn their heads to watch, only compassion for her fate and sympathy with her sufferings. And now, here, this eternal mockery of Menelaus as a deserted husband, these endless good and bad jests on his lot, this barbaric laughter over Helen as unchaste!

Thersites is made the mouthpiece of most of it. Shakespeare found his name in Ovid, and a description of his person in Homer, in one of the books first translated by Chapman:—

"——All sate, and audience gave,
Thersites only would speak all. A most disordered store
Of words he foolishly poured out, of which his mind held more
Than it could manage; anything with which he could procure
Laughter, he never could contain. He should have yet been sure
To touch no kings; t' oppose their states becomes not jesters' parts,
But he the filthiest fellow was of all that had deserts
In Troy's brave siege. He was squint-eyed, and lame of either foot;
So crook-backed that he had no breast; sharp-headed where did shoot
(Here and there spersed) thin mossy hair. He most of all envied
Ulysses and Æacides, whom yet his spleen would chide."

The argument which has been brought forward to prove that Shakespeare could not have known this description creating the character of Thersites is worthless. It has been considered impossible that he, who knew so well how to turn all material to account, should not have profited, in that case, by the famous scene where Odysseus beats Thersites. As a matter of fact, Shakespeare did so, and with much humour, only it is Ajax who is the chastiser, while Thersites exclaims (Act ii. sc. 3): "He beats me, and I rail at him. O worthy satisfaction! would it were otherwise; that I could beat him, while he railed at me."

Clearly enough, the character of the witty, malicious lam-

pooner made an impression upon Shakespeare, and he, probably following the example of earlier plays, transformed him into a clown, and made him act as chorus accompanying the action of the play. Such, obviously, was the Fool in *Lear;* but how different is the melancholy, emotional satire to which King Lear's faithful companion in distress gives vent from the flaying, scorching scorn, the stream of fierce invective wherewith Thersites overwhelms every one and everything.

One cannot but see that these lampoons of Menelaus and Helen represent Shakespeare's own feeling, partly because Thersites is undoubtedly used as a kind of Satyr-chorus, and partly because the dispassionate and unprejudiced characters of the drama express themselves in harmony with him.

Notice, for instance, this reply of Thersites (Act ii. sc. 3):

"After this, the vengeance upon the whole camp! or, rather, the bone-ache! for that, methinks, is the curse upon those that war for a placket. . . . ."

"Here is such patchery, such juggling, and such knavery! all the argument is a cuckold and a whore; a good quarrel to draw emulous factions and bleed to death upon. Now the dry serpigo on the subject! and war and lechery confound all!"

Or read this description of Menelaus (Act v. sc. 1):

"And the goodly transformation of Jupiter there, his brother the bull, the primitive statue and oblique memorial of cuckolds; a thrifty shoeing-horn in a chain, hanging at his brother's leg—to what form but that he is, should wit larded with malice, and malice forced with wit, turn him to? To an ass, were nothing; he is both ass and ox; to an ox, were nothing; he is both ox and ass. To be a dog, a mule, a cat, a fitchew, a toad, a lizard, an owl, a puttock, or a herring without a roe, I would not care; but to be Menelaus! I would conspire against destiny. Ask me not what I would be if I were not Thersites; for I care not to be the louse of a lazar, so I were not Menelaus."

One can by no means accept this as merely the outburst of a brawling slave's hatred of his superiors, for the entirely unprejudiced Diomedes expresses himself in the same spirit to Paris (Act iv. sc. 1):

"*Paris.* And tell me, noble Diomede, faith, tell me true,
Even in the soul of sound good fellowship,

Who, in your thoughts, merits fair Helen best,
Myself or Menelaus.
Diomedes. Both alike:
He merits well to have her that doth seek her,
Not making any scruple of her soilure,
With such a hell of pain and world of charge;
And you as well to keep her, that defend her,
Not palating her dishonour,
With such a costly load of wealth and friends:
He, like a puling cuckold, would drink up
The lees and dregs of a flat tamed piece;
You, like a lecher, out of whorish loins
Are pleased to breed out your inheritors:
Both merits poised, each weighs nor less nor more;
But he as he, the heavier for a whore.
Paris. You are too bitter to your countrywoman.
Diomedes. She's bitter to her country: hear me, Paris:
For every false drop in her bawdy veins
A Grecian's life hath sunk; for every scruple
Of her contaminated carrion weight
A Trojan hath been slain: since she could speak
She hath not given so many good words breath
As for her Greeks and Trojans have suffered death."

In the *Iliad* these forms represent the outcome of the imagination of the noblest people of the Mediterranean shores, unaffected by religious terrors and alcohol; they are bright, glad, reverential fantasies, born in a warm sun under a deep blue sky. From Shakespeare they step forth travestied by the gloom and bitterness of a great poet of a Northern race, of a stock civilised by Christianity, not by culture; a stock which, despite all the efforts of the Renaissance to give new birth to heathendom, has become, once for all, disciplined and habituated to look upon the senses as tempters which lead down into the mire; to which the pleasurable is the forbidden and sexual attraction a disgrace.

How significant it is that Shakespeare only sees Greek love as scourged by the lash of venereal diseases. Throughout the entire play a pestilential breath of innuendo is blown with outbursts of cursing, all centering on a contagion which first showed itself some thousand years after the Homeric times. As Homeric friendships are bestialised, so is Greek love profaned to suit

modern circumstances. To Thersites, the Greek princes are, every one of them, scandalous rakes. "Here's Agamemnon, an honest fellow enough, and one that loves quails, but he has not as much brain as earwax" (Act v. sc. 1). "That same Diomed's a false-hearted rogue, a most unjust knave. . . . They say he keeps a Trojan drab and uses the traitor Calchas' tent.—Nothing but lechery; all incontinent varlets" (Act v. sc. 1). Achilles, that "idol of idiot worshippers," that "full dish of fool," has Queen Hecuba's daughter as a concubine, and has treacherously promised her to leave his fellow-countrymen in the lurch. "Patroclus will give me anything for the intelligence of this whore: the parrot will not do more for an almond than he for a commodious drab. Lechery, lechery still, nothing else holds fashion." Of Menelaus and Paris, "cuckold and cuckold-maker," enough has already been said. Helen has been sternly condemned, and of Cressida with her two adorers, Troilus and Diomedes, "How the devil luxury, with his fat rump and potato-fingers, tickles these two together! Fry lechery, fry" (Act v. sc. 2).

It is clear that the Christian conception of faithlessness in love has displaced the old Hellenic innocence and naïveté. How fervent is Achilles' love for Briseis in Homer; how honest, warm, and indignant he is when he asks Agamemnon's messengers if among the children of men only the Atrides love their wives, and he himself answers that every man who is brave and of good understanding loves and shelters his wife, as he of his inmost heart loved and would shelter Briseis, prisoner of war though she was. None the less does Homer tell us how immediately after Achilles has ended his speech and dismissed his guests, he stretches himself upon his couch, "in the inner room of his tent, richly wrought, and that fair lady by his side that he from Lesbos brought, bright Diomeda." It never occurs to the Greek poet that this implies any faithlessness to the absent Briseis, but Shakespeare's standard is thoroughly and mediævally rigorous.

On two points the comparison between Homer and Shakespeare is inevitable. The first is the farewell between Hector and Andromache. There is nothing finer in Greek poetry (which is to say, any poetry) than this tragic idyl, so profoundly human and movingly beautiful as it is. The pure womanliness which out of deep grief and pain utters a complaint without weakness, and expresses without sentimentality a boundless love poured out

upon this one object: "Thy life makes still my father be, my mother, brother, and besides thou art my husband too. Most loved, most worthy."

In contrast to this womanliness stands the man's strength, untouched by harshness, stirred by the deepest tenderness, but fixed in immovable determination. The picture of the child, too, frightened by the nodding plumes upon his father's helm, until Hector sets the casque upon the ground and kisses the tears from the eyes of his boy. The scene takes place in the sixth book of the *Iliad*, and could not have been known to Shakespeare, inasmuch as it was as yet untranslated by Chapman. See what he sets in its place:

> "*Andromache.* Unarm, unarm, and do not fight to-day.
> *Hector.* You train me to offend you: get you in:
> By all the everlasting gods I'll go!
> *Andromache.* My dreams will, sure, prove ominous to the day.
> *Hector.* No more, I say."

This is the harshness of a mediæval duke; the golden dust is brushed from the wings of the Greek Psyche. If Harald Hardrada, as chieftain of the Varangians, ever gave a thought to the spirit of Greek art, as he passed with his troops through the streets of Constantinople, he must have looked upon it thus, despising the ancient Hellenes because he found the modern cowardly and effeminate.

Shakespeare had no particular place and no particular people in his mind when he wrote this play; he simply robbed the finest scenes of their beauty, because his mind, at that time, had elected to dwell upon the lowest and basest side of human nature.

The second point is the mission to Achilles, told in the ninth book of the *Iliad*. It was translated and published by Chapman in 1598, and must certainly have been known to Shakespeare.[1] This book is one of the few finished works of art which have been produced upon this earth. The Greek Epos itself contains nothing more consummate than its delineation of character, the contrast between the arrogant and the intellectual, the polished and the humorous, the interplay of personality from the highest pathos to the reiterated twaddle of the old man. Achilles' wrath,

[1] The expression "by Jove multi potent," Act iv., sc. 5, is taken from Chapman. This is the only time it is used by Shakespeare.

Nestor's experience, Odysseus' subtle tact, Phœnix's good-natured rambling, the wounded pride of the Hellenic emissaries, are all gathered together in the endeavour to induce Achilles to quit his tent.

Contrast this with the burlesque attempt to provoke that cowardly snob and raw dunce of an Achilles out of his exclusiveness, by passing him by without returning his greeting or seeming conscious of his existence; this same Achilles, who falls upon Hector with his myrmidons and scoundrelly murders him, just as the hero, wearied by battle, has taken off his helmet and laid aside his sword. It reads like the invention of a mediæval barbarian. But Shakespeare is neither mediæval nor a barbarian. No, he has written it down out of a bitterness so deep that he has felt hero-worship, like love, to be an illusion of the senses. As the phantasy of first love is absurd, and Troilus's loyalty towards its object ridiculous, so is the honour of our forefathers and of war in general a delusion. Shakespeare now suspects the most assured reputations; he believes that if Achilles really lived at all, he was most probably a stupid and vainglorious boaster, just as Helen must have been a hussy by no means worthy of the turmoil which was made about her.

As he distorted Achilles into an absurdity, so he wrenched all other personalities into caricatures. Gervinus has justly remarked that Shakespeare here acts very much as his Patroclus does when he mimics Agamemnon's loftiness and Nestor's weakness, for Achilles' delectation (Act i. sc. 3). We feel in the delineation of Nestor that Anglo-Saxon master-hand which seizes upon the unsightly details which the Greek ignores:

> "He coughs and spits,
> And with a palsy fumbling on his gorget,
> Shakes in and out the rivet."

And we recognise in the allusion to the mimicry of Agamemnon that cheap estimate of an actor's profession, which, with a contempt for the whole guild of poets, is discernible throughout Shakespeare's works, in spite of his efforts to raise both callings in the eyes of the public.[1]

[1] "And, like a strutting player, whose conceit
Lies in his hamstring, and doth think it rich

Nestor is overwhelmed with ridicule, and is made to declare, at the close of the first act, that he will hide his silver beard in a golden beaver, and will maintain in duel with Hector that his own long-dead wife was as great a beauty and as chaste a wife as Hector's—grandmother.

Ulysses, who is intended to represent the wise man of the play, is as trivial of mind as the rest. There was a certain amount of grandeur in the way Iago handled Othello, Rodrigo, and Cassio, as though they were mere puppets in his hands; but there is none in the sport Ulysses makes of those swaggering numskulls, Achilles and Ajax. The bitterness which breathes out of all that Shakespeare writes at this period has found gratification in making Ulysses not one whit more sublime than the fools with whom he plays.

Amongst German critics, Gervinus has characterised *Troilus and Cressida* as a good-naturedly humorous play. No description could be more unlikely. Seldom has a poet been less good-natured than Shakespeare here. No less impossible is the theory (also nourished in Gervinus' imagination) that the poet of the English Renaissance was offended by the loose ethics of Homeric poetry. Shakespeare most certainly was never so moral as this moralising German critic (and what German critic is not moralising) would have him to be. It is not a sense of the ethics of Homer, but a feeling for his poetry that is lacking. In Shakespeare's time men took too much pleasure in classical culture to appreciate the antique naïveté. It was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century, when popular poetry once more began to be universally honoured, that Homer displaced Virgil in the popular estimation. Even Goethe preferred Virgil to Homer. Gervinus is equally wide of the mark when, in his anxiety to prove *Troilus and Cressida* a purely literary satire, he hazards the assertion

> To hear the wooden dialogue and sound
> 'Twixt his stretched footing and the scaffoldage,
> Such to be pitied and o'er-wrested seeming
> He acts thy greatness in."

And the passage previously quoted from *Macbeth:*

> "Life's but . . . . . a poor player,
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more."

Also the 110th Sonnet.

that Shakespeare never intended here to "hold up a mirror to his times;"[1] for it is precisely his own times, and no other, that were in his mind when he wrote this play.

[1] "Sein gutmüthiges humoristisches Spiel."—"So kann allerdings aus der ganzen Darstellung die naheliegende Wahrzeit gezogen werden: dass die erhabenste Dichtung ohne streng sittlichen Grundlagen nicht das sei, wozu sie befähigt und berufen ist."—"Gewiss würde er dies Stück nicht unter die rechnen wollen, die der Zeit einen Spiegel vorhalten."—Gervinus: *Shakespeare*, iv. 22, 31, 32.

X

SCORN OF WOMAN'S GUILE AND PUBLIC STUPIDITY

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA first appeared in 1609 in two editions, one of which is introduced by a remarkable and diverting preface, entitled "A never writer to an ever reader, News." It says:—

"Eternall reader, you have heere a new play, never stal'd with the stage, never clapper-clawd with the palmes of the Vulgar, and yet passing full of the palme comicall; for it is a birth of your brain, that never undertooke anything comicall, vainely: And were but the vaine names of commedies changde for the titles of Commodities, or of Playes for Pleas; you should see all those grand censors, that now stile them such vanities, flocke to them for the maine grace of their gravities: especially this author's Commedies, that are so framed to the life, that they serve for the most common Commentaries, of all the actions of our lives, shewing such a dexteritie, and power of witte, that the most displeased with playes are pleased with his comedies. And all such dull and heavy-witted worldlings, as were never capable of the witte of a commedie, coming by report of them to his representations, have found that witte there, that they never found in themselves, and have parted better witted than they came: feeling an edge of witte set upon them, more than ever they dreamed they had brain to grind it on. So much and such sauvred salt of witte is in his Commedies, that they seem (for their height of pleasure) to be borne in that sea that brought forth Venus. Amongst all there is none more witty than this. And had I time I would comment upon it, though I know it needs it not (for so much as will make you think your testerne well bestowed), but for so much worth, as ever poore I know to be stuft in it. It deserves such a labour, as well as the best Commedy in Terence or Plautus. And believe this, that when he is gone, and his Commedies out of sale, you will scramble for them and set up a new English inquisition. Take this for a warning, and at the perrill of your pleasures losse, and judgements, refuse not nor like this the less for not being sullied with the smoaky breath of the multitude; but thanke fortune for the scape

it hath made amongst you. Since by the grand possessors wills I believe you should have prayed for them rather than been prayed. And so I leave all such to be prayed for (for the state of their witte's health) that will not praise it. VALE."

How remarkable a comprehension of Shakespeare's work this old-time preface shows, how clear-sighted an enthusiasm, and how just a perception of his position in the future.

The play was again published in 1623 in folio, and under conditions which betray the publisher's perplexity as to its classification. It is altogether missing from the list of contents, in which the plays are arranged under three headings, comedies, histories, and tragedies. It is thrust, unpaged, into the middle of the book, between the histories and the tragedies, between *Henry VIII.* and *Coriolanus*, probably because the editor mistakenly deemed it to contain more of history and of tragedy than of comedy. Of all Shakespeare's works, it is *Troilus and Cressida* which most nearly approaches the *Don Quixote* of Cervantes.

It is a proof of the stultifying effect of the too close attention of philological critics to metrical peculiarities (peculiarities which a poet can always accommodate as he thinks proper) upon the finer psychological sense, that either the whole or a greater part of *Troilus and Cressida* has been taken for the work of Shakespeare's youth, and has been attributed to the *Romeo and Juliet* period. This view has been taken by L. Moland and C. d'Hericault in their *Nouvelles Françaises du 14me Siècle*, and not a few undiscerning biographers of Shakespeare.

The contrast between the two plays is remarkable and instructive. *Romeo and Juliet* is a genuine work of youth, a product of truth and faith. *Troilus and Cressida* is the outcome of the disillusionment, suspicion, and bitterness of ripe manhood. The critics have been deceived by the apparently astonishing youthfulness of parts of *Troilus and Cressida*, some upon the ground of its occasional euphuisms and bombast (evidently satirical), others by the enthusiasm of youth and absorption in love which some of Troilus's replies express; for instance:

> "I tell thee I am mad
> In Cressid's love: thou answer'st 'She is fair,'
> Pour'st in the open ulcer of my heart
> Her eyes, her hair, her cheek, her gait, her voice," &c.

In his most ardent raptures there sounds a note of ridicule.[1]

All this is a complete inversion of *Romeo and Juliet*. His youthful tragedy portrayed a woman so staunchly true in love that she is driven thereby to a bitter death. *Troilus and Cressida* deals with a woman whose constancy fails at the first proof. There is no abyss between the soul and the senses in *Romeo and Juliet;* the two melt into one in fullest harmony. But it is the lower side of love's ideal nature which is parodied in *Troilus and Cressida*, and causes it to resemble the flippant accompaniment to the serenade in Mozart's *Don Juan*, which caricatures the sentimentality of the text.

It is true that there is a chivalrous fine feeling and sensual tenderness in Troilus's love, which seems to foreshadow, as it were, that which some centuries later found such full expression in Keats. But the melancholy of Shakespeare's matured perception sets its iron tooth in everything at this period of his life, and he looks upon absorption in love as senseless and laughable. He shows us how blindly Troilus runs into the snare, giddy with happiness and uplifted to the heavens, and how the next moment he awakes from his intoxication, betrayed; but he shows it without sympathy, coldly. Therefore, the play never once arouses any true emotion, since Troilus himself never really interests. The piece blazes out, but imparts no warmth. Shakespeare wrote it thus, and therefore, while *Troilus and Cressida* will find many readers who will admire it, few will love it.

Shakespeare deliberately made Cressida sensually attractive, but spiritually repulsive and unclean. She has desire for Troilus, but no love. She is among those who are born experienced; she knows how to inflame, win, and keep men enchained, but the honourable love of a man is useless to her. At the same time she is one of those who easily find their master. Any man who is not imposed upon by her airs, who sees through her

[1] Troilus's euphuisms:—

"I was about to tell thee: when my heart
As wedged with a sigh, would rive in twain,
Lest Hector or my father should perceive me,
I have, as when the sun doth light a storm,
Buried this sigh in wrinkle of a smile" (Act i. sc. 1).

"——O gentle Pandarus,
From Cupid's shoulder pluck his painted wings,
And fly with me to Cressid" (Act iii. sc. 2).

mock-prudish rebuffs, subdues her without difficulty. All her sagacity amounted to, after all, was that Troilus would continue ardent so long as she said "No;" that men, in short, value the unattainable and what is won with difficulty,—the wisdom of any commonplace coquette. Never has Shakespeare represented coquetry as so void of charming qualities.

Cressida is never modest even when she is most prudish; she understands a jest, even bold and libertine ones, and she will bandy them with enjoyment. With all her kittenish charm she is uninteresting, and, in spite of her hot blood, she betrays the coldest selfishness. She is neither ridiculous nor unlovely, but as little is she beautiful; in no other of Shakespeare's characters is the sensual attraction exercised by a woman so completely shorn of its poetry.

Her uncle Pandarus is as experienced as she is in the art of exciting by alternately thrusting forward and holding back. He has been named a demoralised Polonius, and the epithet is good. He is an old voluptuary, who finds his amusement in playing the spy and go-between, now that more active pleasures are denied to him. The cynical enjoyment with which Shakespeare (in spite of his contempt for him) has drawn him is very characteristic of this period of his life. Pandarus is clever enough, and often witty, but there is no enjoyment of his wit; he is as comical, base, and shameless as Falstaff himself, but he never calls forth the abstract sympathy we feel for the latter. Nothing makes amends for his vileness, nor for that of Thersites, nor for that of any other character in the whole play. Here, as in other plays, *Timon of Athens* in particular, is shown that deep-seated Anglo-Saxon vein which, according to the popular estimate, Shakespeare entirely lacked,—that vein in which flows the life-blood of Swift's, Hogarth's, and even some of Byron's principal works, and it shows how, after all, there was some sympathy between the Merrie England of those days and the later Land of Spleen.

We have noticed the harsh strength of Ulysses' judgment of Cressida, and in the decisive scene, in which Troilus is the unseen witness of Cressida's perfidy, are written words so weighty and so full of emotion that we feel Shakespeare's very soul speaks in them.

Diomedes begs Cressida for the scarf which Troilus has given her.

"*Diomedes.* I had your heart before, this follows it.
Troilus (*aside*). I did swear patience.
Cressida. You shall not have it, Diomed, faith you shall not:
I'll give you something else.
Diomedes. I will have this: whose was it?
Cressida. It is no matter.
Diomedes. Come, tell me whose it was?
Cressida. *'Twas one that loved me better than you will,*
But, now you have it, take it."

And the bit of feminine psychology which Shakespeare has given in Cressida's farewell to Diomedes:

"Good-night: I prithee, come.
Troilus, farewell! one eye yet looks on thee,
But with my heart the other eye doth see.
Ah, poor our sex! This fault in us I find,
The error of our eye directs our mind."

And the terrible words Shakespeare puts into Troilus's mouth when he tries so desperately to shake off the impression, and deny the possibility of what he has seen:

"*Ulysses.* Why stay we, then?
Troilus. To make a recordation to my soul
Of every syllable that here was spoken.
But if I tell how these two did co-act,
Shall I not lie in publishing this truth?
Sith yet there is a credence in my heart,
An esperance so obstinately strong,
That doth invert the attest of eyes and ears,
As if those organs had deceptious functions
Created only to calumniate.
Was Cressid here?
Ulysses. I cannot conjure, Trojan.
Troilus. She was not, sure.
Ulysses. Most sure she was.
Troilus. Why, my negation hath no taste of madness.
Ulysses. Nor mine, my lord. Cressid was here but now.
Troilus. Let it not be believed for womanhood!
Think, we had mothers: do not give advantage
To stubborn critics, apt, without a theme,

For depravation, to square this general sex
By Cressid's rule; rather think this not Cressid.
Ulysses. What hath she done, prince, that can soil our mothers?
Troilus. Nothing at all, unless that that were she."

Not only Troilus, but the whole play has here become permeated by Ulysses' conception of Cressida, and in this despairing outburst, "Think, we had mothers," is the pith of the piece uttered forth with terrible clearness.

Yet Troilus and Cressida by no means represent the whole of the play. In order to counterbalance the slightness of the action, the bombastic speech, the railing abuse, and the heavy bitter Juvenal-like satire of his drama, Shakespeare has interpolated some serious and thoughtful utterances in which some of the fruits of his abundant experience are expressed in weighty and concise form.

Achilles, and more especially Ulysses, give vent to profound political and psychological reflections, entirely regardless of the fact that the one is a thoughtless blockhead, and the other is a crafty and unsympathetic nature, the mere negative pole of Troilus, cold as he is warm, cunning as he is naïve. These remarkable and thoughtful utterances, not in the least in harmony with their characters, stand in direct contradiction to the whole play and its farcical treatment, but they are none the less notable for that. This singular inconsistency is one of the many in which this incongruous play is so rich, and it is these very contradictions which make it attractive, insomuch as they reveal the conflicting moods from which it sprang. They arrest the attention like the irregular features of a face whose expression varies between irony, satire, melancholy, and profundity.

Ulysses, who is represented as the sole statesman among the Greeks, degrades himself by low flattery of the idiotic Ajax, servilely referring to him as "this thrice worthy and right valiant lord," who should not soil the victory he has won by going as messenger to Achilles' tent, and he persuades the princes to pass Achilles by without greeting him. On this occasion Achilles, who is otherwise but a braggart, dolt, coward, and scoundrel, surprises us by a succession of outbursts, in each of which he gives voice to as deep and bitter knowledge of human nature as does Timon of Athens himself.

"What, am I poor of late?
'Tis certain greatness once fall'n out with Fortune
Must fall out with men too: what the declined is
He shall as soon read in the eyes of others,
As feel in his own fall.
. . . . . .
And not a man, for being simply man,
Hath any honour, but honour for those honours
That are without him, as place, riches, favour,
Prizes of accident as oft as merit:
Which when they fall, as being slippery standers,
The love that leaned on them is slippery too,
Do one pluck down another, and together
Die in the fall."

Ulysses now enters upon a thoughtful conversation with Achilles, calling his attention to the fact that no man, however highly advanced he may be, has any real knowledge of his worth until he has received the judgment of others and observed their attitude towards him. Achilles answers him a happy and pertinent analogy on principles of pure philosophical reasonings, and Ulysses continues:

"That no man is the lord of anything
Till he communicate his parts to others;
Nor doth he of himself know them for aught
Till he behold them formed in the applause
Where they're extended: who like an arch reverberates
The voice again, or, like a gate of steel
Fronting the sun, receives and renders back
His figure and his heart."

Achilles interrupts a long discourse, ending with a thrust at Ajax, with the question "What, are my deeds forgot?" and the remarkable answer he receives reveals, to an observant reader, one of the sources of the bitterness and pessimism of the play. It can scarcely be doubted that Shakespeare at this time felt himself ousted from the popular favour by younger and less worthy men: we know that immediately after his death he was eclipsed by Fletcher. He is absorbed by a feeling of the ingratitude of man and the injustice of what is called the way of the world. We found the first traces of this feeling in the words of Bertram's

dead father, quoted by the King in *All's Well that Ends Well*, and here it breaks out in full force in a reply whose very weak pretext is that of showing Achilles how ill advised he is to rest upon his laurels:

"Time hath, my lord, a wallet on his back,
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,
A great-sized monster of ingratitudes:
Those scraps are good deeds past, which are devoured
As fast as they are made, forgot as soon
As done: perseverance dear, my lord,
Keeps honour bright: to have done is to hang
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail
In monumental mockery. Take the instant way;
For honour travels in a strait so narrow,
Where but one goes abreast: keep then the path;
For emulation hath a thousand sons
That one by one pursue: if you give way,
Or hedge aside from the direct forthright,
Like to an entered tide, they all rush by
And leave you hindmost;
Or like a gallant horse fall'n in first rank,
Lie there for pavement to the abject rear,
O'errun and trampled on: then what they do in present,
Though less than yours in past, must o'ertop yours;
For time is like a fashionable host,
That slightly shakes his parting guest by the hand,
And with his arms outstretched, as he would fly,
Grasps in the comer; welcome ever smiles,
And farewell goes out sighing. Oh, let not virtue seek
Remuneration for the thing it was;
For beauty, wit,
High birth, vigour of bone, desert in service,
Love, friendship, charity are subjects all
To envious and calumniating time.
One touch of nature makes the whole world kin,
That all with one consent praise new-born gauds,
Though they are made and moulded of things past;
And give to dust that is a little gilt
More land than gilt o'erdusted."

How plainly is one of the sources betrayed here of the black waters of bitterness which bubble up in *Troilus and Cressida*, a

bitterness which spares neither man nor woman, war nor love, hero nor lover, and which springs in part from woman's guile, in part from the undoubted stupidity of the English public. In the latter part of the conversation between Ulysses and Achilles the former has some renowned words on the direction of the state—its ideal government, that is to say. The incongruity between the circumstance of utterance and the utterance itself is nowhere more striking in this play than here. Ulysses tells Achilles that they all know why he refuses to take part in the battle; every one is well aware that he is in love with Priam's daughter; and when Achilles exclaims in amazement at finding the secrets of his private life disclosed, Ulysses, with a solemnity inconsistent with the triviality of the subject and the grim ways of espionage, gives the almost mystical and too profound answer:

> "Is that a wonder?
> The providence that's in a watchful state
> Knows almost every grain of Pluto's gold,
> Finds bottom in the uncomprehensive deeps,
> Keeps place with thought, and almost, like the gods,
> Does thoughts unveil in their dumb cradles.
> There is a mystery—with whom relation
> Durst never meddle—in the soul of state;
> Which hath an operation more divine
> Than breath or pen can give expression to."

He then turns abruptly to the subject of Achilles's amours with Polyxena being common talk, and seeks to provoke the lover into joining the combat by telling him that it has become a common jest that Achilles has conquered Hector's sister, but that Ajax has subdued Hector himself, and then ends his speech with the following obscure allusion to the relation between Achilles and Ajax:—

> "Farewell, my lord. I as your lover speak:
> The fool slides o'er the ice that you should break."[1]

[1] F. Halliwell-Phillips has published, concerning these last two lines, a miniature book, *The Fool and the Ice*, London, 1883. He explains that a whole little history lies behind this curious simile. When Lord Chandos's Company played at Evesham, near Stratford (before 1600), a country fool there, Jack Miller by name, became so infatuated with their clown that he wanted to run away with them, and had, consequently, to be locked up. He saw from the window, however, that the

In spite of the strange inconsistency of all these political allusions, they are of the greatest interest to us, inasmuch as they so clearly indicate Shakespeare's next great work, the Roman tragedy of *Coriolanus* (1608).

Ulysses makes steady protest against the vulgar error that it is the gross work, and not the guiding spirit, which is decisive in war and politics. He complains of the abuse Achilles and Thersites heap upon the leaders of the campaign (Act i. sc. 3):

> "They tax our policy and call it cowardice,
> Count wisdom as no member of the war,
> Forestall prescience, and esteem no act
> But that of hand: the still and mental parts
> That do contrive how many hands shall strike
> When fitness calls them on, and know by measure
> Of their observant toil the enemies' weight—
> Why, this hath not a finger's dignity," &c.

It is, of course, Thersites who has taken the lead; the light wit and deep humour of the earlier clowns is displaced in him by the frantic outbursts of a contemptible scamp. Throughout, Thersites is intended as a caricature of the envious and worthless (if sharp-sighted) plebeian, of whose wit Shakespeare has need for the complete scourging of an arrogant and corrupt aristocracy, but whose politics are the subject of his utter disgust and scorn. As the haughty intelligence of Ulysses seems to foreshadow Prospero, but without his bright supernatural clearness, so does Thersites seem to be a preliminary sketch for Caliban, barring his heavy, earthy, grotesque clumsiness. The character more immediately allied to that of Thersites, however, is not Caliban, but that grim cynic Apemantus in *Timon of Athens*.

Still more significant than the previously quoted lines is the speech in which Ulysses (Act i. sc. 3) develops a political view which was obviously Shakespeare's own, and which is soon to be proclaimed in *Coriolanus*. Its point of view proceeds from the conviction, expressed in our day by Nietzsche, that the distance

company was preparing to depart, and springing out, sped, in spite of the danger, over forty yards of ice so thin that it would not bear a piece of brick which was laid upon it. (First told in a little book by the player Robert Arnim, afterwards one of Shakespeare's colleagues. It was published in 1603 under the title "Foole upon Foole, or Sixe Sortes of Sottes, by Colonnico del Mondo Snuffe," clown at the Globe Theatre.)

between man and man must on no account be bridged over, and is introduced by a half-astronomical, half-astrological explanation of the Ptolemaic system:

> "The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre
> Observe degree, priority, and place,
> Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,
> Office and custom, in all line of order;
> And therefore is the glorious planet Sol
> In noble eminence enthroned and sphered
> Amidst the others; whose med'cinable eye
> Corrects the ill aspects of planets evil,
> And posts, like the commandment of a king,
> Sans check to good and bad: but when the planets
> In evil mixture to disorder wander,
> What plagues and what portents! what mutiny!
> What raging of the sea! frights, changes, horrors,
> Divert and crack, rend and deracinate
> The unity and married calm of states
> Quite from their fixture."

The remainder of the passage has become a fixed ingredient of English Shakespearian anthologies, and carries us on directly into *Coriolanus:*

> "Oh, when degree is shaked,
> Which is the ladder to all high designs,
> Then enterprise is sick. . . .
> Take but degree away, untune that string,
> And hark, what discord follows! each thing meets
> In mere oppugnancy: the bounded waters
> Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,
> And make a sop of all this solid globe:
> Strength should be lord of imbecility,
> And the rude son should strike the father dead.
> Force should be right; or rather right and wrong,
> Between whose endless jar justice resides,
> Should lose their names, and so should justice too.
> . . . . . .
> This chaos, when degree is suffocate,
> Follows the choking.
> And this neglection of degree it is
> That by a pace goes backward, with a purpose

It hath to climb. The general's disdained
By him one step below, he by the next,
That next by him beneath. . . .
. . . It grows to an envious fever
Of pale and bloodless emulation."

Shakespeare has so often emphasised the superiority of real merit to outside show, that he needs no vindication from a charge of worship of mere rank and station. What he here expresses is merely that inherently aristocratic point of view which we recognised in his early works, and which has intensified with increasing years. It was from the first founded upon a conviction that only among an hereditary aristocracy, under a well-established monarchy, was any patronage of his art and profession possible, and the opinion, steadily nourished by the enmity of the middle classes, will soon be expressed with extraordinary vehemence in *Coriolanus.*

Troilus and Cressida, then, which seems at first sight to be a romantic play founded on an old world subject, is in reality, despite its embellishments, a satire on the ancient material, and a parody of romanticism itself. It cannot therefore be classed with the attempts made by other great poets to resuscitate the old Greek personalities. Racine's *Iphigenia in Aulis* and Goethe's *Iphigenia in Tauris*, were written in serious earnestness, although neither of them approximated closely to the old world of tradition. Racine's Greeks are courtly Frenchmen from the salons, and Goethe's are German princes and princesses, of humane and classic culture, who attitudinise like the figures in a painting by Raphael Mengs. It may be said that Shakespeare's Hector, who quotes Aristotle, and his Lord Achilles, with his spurs and long sword, are as much noblemen of the Renaissance as Racine's Seigneur Achilles is a courtier in periwig and red-heeled shoes. But Racine meant no satire, while Shakespeare most deliberately caricatured. All turns to discord under his touch; love is betrayed, heroes are murdered, constancy ridiculed, levity and coarseness triumph, and no gleam of better things shines out at the end. The play closes with an indecent jest of the loathsome Pandar's.

XI

DEATH OF SHAKESPEARE'S MOTHER—CORIOLANUS —HATRED OF THE MASSES

SHAKESPEARE'S mother was buried on the 9th of September 1608. He had travelled about the country of late, playing with his company, from the middle of May until far into the autumn, during which period court and aristocracy were absent from the capital. It is not certain whether he had returned to London at this time or not, but he hastened to Stratford on hearing of his mother's death, and must have stayed some time on his property, "New Place," after attending her funeral; for we find him still at Stratford on the 16th of October. On that day he stands godfather to the son of a friend of his youth, Henry Walker, an alderman of the borough, who is mentioned in Shakespeare's will.

The death of a mother is always a mournfully irreparable loss, often the saddest a man can sustain. We can realise how deeply it would go to Shakespeare's heart when we remember the capacity for profound and passionate feeling with which nature had blessed and cursed him. We know little of his mother; but judging from that affinity which generally exists between famous sons and their mothers, we may suppose that she was no ordinary woman. Mary Arden, who belonged to an old and honourable family, which traced its descent (perhaps justly) back to the days of Edward the Confessor, represented the haughty patrician element of the Shakespeare family. Her ancestors had borne their coat of arms for centuries, and the son would be proud of his mother for this among other reasons, just as the mother would be proud of her son.

In the midst of the prevailing gloom and bitterness of his spirit, this fresh blow fell upon him, and, out of his weariness of life as his surroundings and experiences showed it to him, recalled this one mainstay to him—his mother. He remembered

all she had been to him for forty-four years, and the thoughts of the man and the dreams of the poet were thus led to dwell upon the significance in a man's life of this unique form, comparable to no other—his mother.

Thus it was that, although his genius must follow the path it had entered upon and pursue it to the end, we find, in the midst of all that was low and base in his next work, this one sublime mother-form, the proudest and most highly-wrought that he has drawn, Volumnia.

The *Tragedy of Coriolanus* was first published in 1623, in folio edition, but 1608 is the generally accepted date of its production, partly because a speech in Ben Jonson's *The Silent Woman* (1609) seems to indicate a reminiscence of *Coriolanus*, and partly because many different critics concur in the opinion that its style and versification point to that year.

How came this work to emerge from the depths of all the discontent, despondency, hatred of life, and contempt for humanity which went at this time to make up Shakespeare's soul? He was angry and soured, and the sources of his embittered feelings are embodied in his plays, seeking outlet, now under one, now under another form. In *Troilus and Cressida* it was the relation of the sexes; here it is social conditions and politics.

His point of view is as personal as it well could be. Shakespeare's aversion to the mob was based upon his contempt for their discrimination, but it had its deepest roots in the purely physical repugnance of his artist nerves to their plebeian atmosphere. It was obvious in *Troilus and Cressida* that the irritation with public stupidity was at its height. He now, for the third time, finds in his Plutarch a subject which not only responds to the mood of the moment, but also gives him an opportunity for portraying a notable mother; and he is irresistibly drawn to give his material dramatic style.

It is the old traditional story of Coriolanus, great man and great general, who, in the remote days of Roman antiquity, became involved in such hopeless conflict with the populace of his native city, and was so roughly dealt with by them in return, that he was driven, in his bitterness, to reckless deeds.

Plutarch, however, was by no means prejudiced against the people, and the subject had to be entirely re-fashioned by Shakespeare before it would harmonise with his mood. The historian

may be guilty of serious contradictions in matters of detail, but he endeavours, to the best of his ability, to enter into the circumstances of times which were of hoary antiquity, even to him. The main drift of his narrative is to the effect that Coriolanus had already attained to great authority and influence in the city, when the Senate, which represented the wealth of the community, came into collision with the masses. The people were overridden by usurers, the law was terribly severe upon debtors, and the poor were subjected to incessant distraint; their few possessions were sold, and men who had fought bravely for their country and were covered with honourable scars were frequently imprisoned. In the recent war with the Sabines the patricians had been forced to promise the people better treatment in the future, but the moment the war was over they broke their word, and distraint and imprisonment went on as before. After this the plebeians refused to come forward at the conscription, and the patricians, in spite of the opposition of Coriolanus, were compelled to yield.

Shakespeare was evidently incapable of forming any idea of the free citizenship of olden days, still less of that period of ferment during which the Roman people united to form a vigorous political party, a civic and military power combined, which proved the nucleus round which the great Roman Empire eventually shaped itself — a power of which J. L. Heiberg's words on thought might have been predicted: "It will conquer the world, nothing less."

Much the same thing was occurring in Shakespeare's own time, and, under his very eyes, as it were, the English people were initiating their struggle for self-government. But they who constituted the Opposition were antagonistic to him and his art, and he looked without sympathy upon their conflict. Thus it was that those proud and self-reliant plebeians, who exiled themselves to Mons Sacer sooner than submit to the yoke of the patricians, represented no more to him than did that London mob which was daily before his eyes. To him the Tribunes of the People were but political agitators of the lowest type, mere personifications of the envy of the masses, and representatives of their stupidity and their brute force of numbers. Ignoring every incident which shed a favourable light upon the plebeians, he seized upon every instance of popular folly which could be found

in Plutarch's account of a later revolt, in order to incorporate it in his scornful delineation. Again and again he insists, by means of his hero's passionate invective, on the cowardice of the people, and that in the face of Plutarch's explicit testimony to their bravery. His detestation of the mass thrived upon this reiterated accentuation of the wretched pusillanimity of the plebeians, which went hand-in-hand with a rebellious hatred for their benefactors.

Was it Shakespeare's intention to allude to the strained relations existing between James and his Parliament? Does Coriolanus represent an aristocratically-minded poet's side-glance at the political situation in England? I fancy it does. Heaven knows there was little resemblance between the amazingly craven and vacillating James and the haughty, resolute hero of Roman tradition, who fought a whole garrison single-handed. Nor was it personal resemblance which suggested the comparison, but a general conception of the situation as between a beneficent power on the one hand and the people on the other. He regarded the latter wholly as mob, and looked upon their struggle for freedom as mutiny, pure and simple.

It is hard to have to say it, but the more one studies Shakespeare with reference to contemporary history, the more is one struck by the evident necessity he felt, in spite of the undoubted disgust with which King and Court inspired him, for seeking the support of the kingly power against his adversaries. Many are the unmistakable, though discreet and delicate, compliments he addresses to the monarch.

It was even before his accession that we detected, in *Hamlet*, the first glance in the direction of James. The accentuation of Hamlet's relations with the players is not without its acknowledgments and appeal to the Scottish monarch. In *Measure for Measure* the stress laid upon the Duke's doubly careful watch over all that transpires in Vienna during the apparent neglect of his absence was undoubtedly intended to excuse James's somewhat cowardly desertion of London, immediately after his coronation, for the whole time the plague raged there. We find this feeling again in *Coriolanus*, and again in *The Tempest*, which was written for the wedding festivities of the Princess Elizabeth and the Elector Palatine, and which contains, under cover of the sagacious Prospero, many subtle and dainty, but utterly unde-

served, compliments to the wise and learned King James. There is a striking analogy between the relations of Molière to Louis XIV. and those of Shakespeare to his king. Both great men had the religious prejudices of the people against them; both, as poets of the royal theatre, had to make some show of subservience, but Molière could feel a more sincere admiration for his Louis than could Shakespeare for his James.

In an otherwise masterly review of *The Tempest* in the *Universal Review* for 1889, Richard Garnett has called *Coriolanus* a reflection of a Conservative's view of James's struggle with the Parliament. This is an exaggeration, which leads him to raise the question as to whether the play owed its origin to the first conflict with the House, or the second in 1614. He pronounces for the latter, and thus arrives at an opinion, held by himself alone, that *Coriolanus* was Shakespeare's last work.

The argument on which he bases this view proves, on closer inspection, to be entirely worthless. Some lines in the fifth Act (sc. 5) run as follows:

> "Think with thyself
> How much more unfortunate than all living women
> Are we come thither."

In the older editions of North's translations of Plutarch (1595 and 1603) it stands thus: "How much more *unfortunately* than all the women living," the form *unfortunate* of the tragedy not appearing until the edition of 1612. This circumstance was detected by Halliwell-Phillips, and led him and Garnett to the conclusion that Shakespeare used the edition of 1612, and cannot therefore have written his drama before that year. When we consider how very slight the deviation is, and how it was practically necessitated by the metre, we see what a poor criterion it is of the date of production. Moreover, precisely the opposite conclusion might be drawn from a comparison of North's translation with other details of the play. In the fourth Act (sc. 5) we find, for example:

> "——For if
> I had feared death, of all men i' the world
> I would have 'voided thee; but *in mere spite*
> To be quit of those my banishers
> Stand I before thee here."

In the 1579 and 1595 editions of North it stands thus: "For if I had feared death, I would not have come thither to have put myself in hazard, but prickt forward *with spite*."

In all later editions the italicised words are omitted, "with desire to be revenged" being substituted in their stead. According to this method, a very much earlier date might be assumed for *Coriolanus*, but both arguments are equally worthless.

We have, therefore, no occasion to abandon 1608 on that ground, and we have certainly no need to do so for the sake of a fanciful approximation of the position of Coriolanus to that of James at the dissolution of Parliament in 1614.

Thus much, at any rate, can be declared with absolute certainty, that the anti-democratic spirit and passion of the play sprang from no momentary political situation, but from Shakespeare's heart of hearts. We have watched its growth with the passing of years. A detestation of the mob, a positive hatred of the mass as mass, can be traced in the faltering efforts of his early youth. We may see its workings in what is undoubtedly Shakespeare's own description of Jack Cade's rebellion in the *Second Part of Henry VI.*, and we divine it again in the conspicuous absence of all allusion to Magna Charta displayed in *King John.*

We have already stated that Shakespeare's aristocratic contempt for the mob had its root in a purely physical aversion for the atmosphere of the "people." We need but to glance through his works to find the proof of it. In the *Second Part of Henry VI.* (Act iv. sc. 7) Dick entreats Cade "that the laws of England may come out of his mouth;" whereupon Smith remarks aside: "It will be stinking law; for his breath stinks with eating toasted cheese." And again in Casca's description of Cæsar's demeanour when he refuses the crown at the Lupercalian festival: "He put it the third time by, and still he refused it; the rabblement hooted and clapped their chapped hands, and threw up their sweaty nightcaps, and *uttered such a deal of stinking breath* because Cæsar refused the crown, that it had almost choked Cæsar; for he swooned and fell down at it: and for mine own part, I durst not laugh for fear of opening my lips and receiving the bad air" (*Julius Cæsar*, Act i. sc. 2).

Also the words in which Cleopatra (in the last scene of the

play) expresses her horror of being taken in Octavius Cæsar's triumph to Rome:

> "Now, Iras, what thinkest thou?
> Thou, an Egyptian puppet, shalt be shown
> In Rome as well as I: mechanic slaves,
> With greasy aprons, rules, and hammers, shall
> Uplift us to the view; *in their thick breaths,*
> *Rank of gross diet, shall we be enclosed*
> *And forced to drink their vapour.*"

All Shakespeare's principal characters display this shrinking from the mob, although motives of interest may induce them to keep it concealed. When Richard II., having banished Bolingbroke, describes the latter's farewell to the people, he says (*Richard II.*, Act i. sc. 4):

> "Ourself and Bushy, Bagot here and Green,
> Observed his courtship to the common people;
> How did he seem to dive into their hearts
> With humble and familiar courtesy,
> Wooing poor craftsmen with the craft of smiles
> And patient underbearing of his fortune,
> As 'twere to banish their effects with him.
> Off goes his bonnet to an oyster-wench,
> A brace of draymen bid God-speed him well,
> And had the tribute of his supple knee,
> With 'Thanks, my countrymen, my loving friends.'"

The number of these passages proves that it was, in plain words, their evil smell which repelled Shakespeare. He was the true artist in this respect too, and more sensitive to noxious fumes than any woman. At the present period of his life this particular distaste has grown to a violent aversion. The good qualities and virtues of the people do not exist for him; he believes their sufferings to be either imaginary or induced by their own faults. Their struggles are ridiculous to him, and their rights a fiction; their true characteristics are accessibility to flattery and ingratitude towards their benefactors; and their only real passion is an innate, deep, and concentrated hatred of their superiors; but all these qualities are merged in this chief crime: they *stink.*

> "*Cor.* For the mutable *rank-scented* many, let them
> Regard me as I do not flatter, and
> Therein behold themselves" (Act iii. sc. 1).

"*Brutus.* I heard him swear,
Were he to stand for consul, never would he
Appear i' the market-place, nor on him put
The napless vesture of humility;
Nor, showing as the manner is, his wounds
To the people, beg their *stinking breaths*" (Act ii. sc. 1).

When Coriolanus is banished by the people, he turns upon them with the outburst:

"You common cry of curs! *whose breath I hate*
As reek o' the rotten fens, whose loves I prize
As the dead carcases of unburied men
That do corrupt my air" (Act iii. sc. 3).

When old Menenius, Coriolanus's enthusiastic admirer, hears that the banished man has gone over to the Volscians, he says to the People's Tribunes:

"You have made good work,
You and your apron-men: you that stood so much
Upon the voice of occupation and
The breath of *garlic-eaters!*" (Act iv. sc. 6).

And a little farther on:

"Here come the clusters.
And is Aufidius with him? You are they
That made the air unwholesome when you cast
Your *stinking* greasy caps up, hooting at
Coriolanus' exile."

If we seek to know how Shakespeare came by this non-political but purely sensuous contempt for the people, we must search for the reason among the experiences of his own daily life. Where but in the course of his connection with the theatre would he come into contact with those whom he looked upon as human vermin? He suffered under the perpetual obligation of writing, staging, and acting his dramas with a view to pleasing the Great Public. His finest and best had always most difficulty in making its way, and hence the bitter words in *Hamlet* about the "excellent play" which "was never acted, or, if it was, not above once; for the play, I remember, pleased not the *million*."

Into this epithet, "the million," Shakespeare has condensed

his contempt for the masses as art critics. Even the poets, and they are many, who have been honest and ardent political democrats, have seldom extended their belief in the majority to a faith in its capacity for appraising their art. The most liberal-minded of them all well know that the opinion of a connoisseur is worth more than the judgment of a hundred thousand ignoramuses. With Shakespeare, however, his artist's scorn for the capacity of the many did not confine itself to the sphere of Art, but included the world beyond. As, year after year, his glance fell from the stage upon the flat caps covering the unkempt hair of the crowding heads down there in the open yard which constituted the pit, his sentiments grew increasingly contemptuous towards "the groundlings." These unwashed citizens, "the understanding gentlemen of the ground," as Ben Jonson nicknamed them, were attired in unlovely black smocks and goatskin jerkins, which had none too pleasant an odour. They were called "nutcrackers" from their habit of everlastingly cracking nuts and throwing the shells upon the stage. Tossing about apple-peel, corks, sausage ends, and small pebbles was another of their amusements. Tobacco, ale, and apple vendors forced their way among them, and even before the curtain was lifted a reek of tobacco-smoke and beer rose from the crowd impatiently waiting for the prima donna to be shaved. The fashionable folk of the stage and boxes, whom they hated, and with whom they were ever seeking occasion to brawl, called them *stinkards*. Abuse was flung backwards and forwards between them, and the pit threw apples and dirt, and even went so far as to spit on to the stage. In the *Gull's Hornebooke* (1609) Dekker says: "The stage, like time, will bring you to most perfect light and lay you open: neither are you to be hunted from thence, though the *scarecrows* in the *yard* hoot at you, hiss at you, spit on you." As late as 1614 the prologue to an old comedy, *The Hog has lost his Pearl*, says:

> "We may be pelted off for what we know,
> With apples, eggs, or stones, from *those below*."

Who knows if Shakespeare was better satisfied with the less rowdy portion of his audience? Art was not the sole attraction of the theatre. We read in an old book on English plays:—"In the play-houses at London it is the fashion of youthes to

go first into the *yarde* and carry their eye through every gallery; then, like unto ravens, when they spy the carrion, thither they fly and press as near to the fairest as they can."[1] These fine gentlemen, who sat or reclined at full length on the stage, were probably as much occupied with their ladies as the less well-to-do theatre-goers. We know that they occasionally watched the play as Hamlet did, with their heads in their mistresses' laps, for the position is described in Fletcher's *Queen of Corinth* (Act i. sc. 2):

> "For the fair courtier, the woman's man,
> That tells my lady stories, dissolves riddles,
> Ushers her to her coach, *lies at her feet*
> *At solemn masques, applauding what she laughs at.*"

Dekker (*Gull's Hornebooke*) informs us that keen card-playing went on amongst some of the spectators, while others read, drank, or smoked tobacco. Christopher Marlowe has an epigram on this last practice, and Ben Jonson complains in his *Bartholomew Fair* of "those who accommodate gentlemen with tobacco at our theatres." He gives an elaborate description in his play, *The Case is Altered*, of the manner in which capricious lordlings conducted themselves at the performance of a new piece:—

"And they have such a habit of dislike in all things, that they will approve nothing, be it never so conceited or elaborate; but sit dispersed, making faces and spitting, wagging their upright ears, and cry, filthy, filthy; simply uttering their own condition, and using their wryed countenances instead of a vice, to turn the good aspects of all that shall sit near them, from what they behold" (Act ii. sc. 6).

The fact that women's parts were invariably played by young men may have contributed to the general rowdyism of the play-going public, although, on the other hand, it must have been conducive to greater morality on the part of those directly connected with the theatre. It was surely a real amelioration of Shakespeare's fate that the difficulties with which he had to struggle were not increased by that enthralling and ravishing evil which bears the name of actress.[2]

[1] *Plays confuted in Five several Actions*, by Stephen Gosson, 1580.

[2] It is therefore a droll error into which the otherwise admirable writer, Professor Fr. Paulson, falls in his essay, *Hamlet die Tragedie des Pessimismus* (*Deutsche*

The notion of feminine characters being taken by a woman was so foreign to England that the individual who ascertained the use of forks in Italy, discovered the existence of actresses at the same time and in the same place. Coryate writes from Venice in July 1608:—"Here I observed certaine things that I never saw before; for I saw women act, a thing I never saw before, though I have heard that it hath been sometimes used in London; and they performed it with as good a grace, action, gestures, and whatsoever convenient for a player, as I ever saw any masculine actor." It was not until forty-four years after Shakespeare's death that a woman stepped on to the English stage. We know precisely when and in what play she appeared. On the 8th of December 1660 the part of Desdemona was taken by an Englishwoman. The prologue read upon this occasion is still in existence.[1]

A theatrical audience of those days was, to Shakespeare's eyes at any rate, an uncultivated horde, and it was this crowd which represented to him "the people." He may have looked upon them in his youth with a certain amount of goodwill and forbearance, but they had become entirely odious to him now. It was undoubtedly the constant spectacle of the "*understanders*," and the atmosphere of their exhalations, which caused his scorn to flame so fiercely over democratic movements and their leaders, and all that ingratitude and lack of perception which, to him, represented "the people."

With his necessarily slight historical knowledge and insight, Shakespeare would look upon the old days of both Rome and

Rundschau, vol. lix. p. 243), when he remarks as a proof of the sensuality of Hamlet's nature: "Man erinnere sich nur seiner Intimität mit den Schauspielern; als sie ankommen, fällt sein Blick sogleich auf die Füsse der *Schauspielerin*."

[1] "A Prologue to introduce the first woman that came to act on this stage, in the tragedy called *The Moor of Venice*:"—

"I come unknown to any of the rest
To tell you news; I saw the lady drest.
The woman plays to day; mistake me not,
No man in gown or page in petticoat:
A woman to my knowledge, yet I can't
If I should die, make affidavit on't. . . .
'Tis possible a virtuous woman may
Abhor all sorts of looseness and yet play,
Play on the stage when all eyes are upon her.
Shall we count that a crime, France counts an honour?"

England in precisely the same light in which he saw his own times. His first Roman drama testifies to his innately anti-democratic tendencies. He seized with avidity upon every instance in Plutarch of the stupidity and brutality of the masses. Recall, for example, the scene in which the mob murders Cinna, the poet, for no better reason than its fury against Cinna, the conspirator (*Julius Cæsar*, Act iii. sc. 3):

"*Third Citizen.* Your name, sir, truly.

"*Cinna.* Truly my name is Cinna.

"*First Citizen.* Tear him to pieces; he's a conspirator.

"*Cinna.* I am Cinna the poet. I am Cinna the poet.

"*Fourth Citizen.* Tear him for his bad verses. Tear him for his bad verses.

"*Cinna.* I am not Cinna the conspirator.

"*Fourth Citizen.* It is no matter, his name 's Cinna; pluck but his name out of his heart, and turn him going.

"*Third Citizen.* Tear him, tear him!"

All four citizens are alike in their bloodthirsty fury. Shakespeare displays the same aristocratic contempt for the fickle crowd, whose opinion wavers with every speaker; witness its complete change of front immediately after Antony's oration. It was this feeling, possibly, which was at the bottom of his want of success in dealing with Cæsar. He probably found Cæsar antipathetic, not on the ground of his subversion of a republican form of government, but as leader of the Roman democracy. Shakespeare sympathised with the conspiracy of the nobles against him because all popular rule—even that which was guided by genius—was repugnant to him, inasmuch as it was power exercised, directly or indirectly, by an ignorant herd.

This point of view meets us again and again in *Coriolanus;* and whereas, in his earlier plays, it was only occasionally and, as it were, accidentally expressed, it has now grown and strengthened into deliberate utterance.

I am aware that, generally speaking, neither English nor German critics will agree with me in this. Englishmen, to whom Shakespeare is not only their national poet, but the voice of wisdom itself, will, as a rule, see nothing in his poetry but a love of all that is simple, just, and true. They consider that due attention, on the whole, has been paid to the rights of the people

in this play; that it contains the essence, as it were, of all that can be urged in favour of either democracy or aristocracy, and that Shakespeare himself was impartial. His hero is by no means, they say, represented in a favourable light; he is ruined by his pride, which, degenerating into unbearable arrogance, causes him to commit the crime of turning his arms against his country, and brings him to a miserable end. His relations with his mother represent the sole instance in which the inhuman, anti-social intractability of Coriolanus' character relaxes and softens; otherwise he is hard and unlovable throughout. The Roman people, on the other hand, are represented as good and amiable in the main; they are certainly somewhat inconstant, but Coriolanus is no less fickle than they, and certainly less excusable. That plebeian greed of plunder which so exasperated Marcius at Corioli is common to the private soldier of all times. No, they say, Shakespeare was totally unprejudiced, or, if he had a preference, it was for old Menenius, the free-spoken, patriotic soul who always turns a cheerfully humorous side to the people, even when he sees their faults most plainly.

I am simply repeating here a view of the matter actually expressed by eminent English and American critics—a view which, presumably therefore, represents that of the English-speaking public in general.[1]

In Germany also—more particularly at the time when Shakespeare's dramas were interpreted by liberal professors, who involuntarily brought them into harmony with their own ideas and those of the period—many attempts were made to prove that Shakespeare was absolutely impartial in political matters. Some even sought to make him a Liberal after the fashion of those who, early in this century, went by that name in Central Europe.

We have no interest, however, in re-fashioning Shakespeare. It is enough for us if our perception is fine and keen enough to recognise him in his works, and we must actually put on blinders not to see on which side Shakespeare's sympathies lie here. He is only too much of one mind with the senators who say that "poor suitors have strong breaths," and Coriolanus, who is never refuted or contradicted, says no more than what the poet in his own person would endorse.

[1] See *Shakespeare's Tragedy of Coriolanus*, by the Rev. Henry N. Hudson, Professor of Shakespeare at Boston University. Boston, 1881.

In the first scene of the play, immediately following Menenius' well-known parable of the belly and the other members of the body, Marcius appears and fiercely advocates the view Menenius has humorously expressed :

> "He that will give good words to thee will flatter
> Beneath abhorring. What would you have, you curs,
> That like not peace nor war? He that trusts to you,
> Where he should find you lions, finds you hares;
> Where foxes, geese; you are no surer, no,
> Than is the coal of fire upon the ice,
> Or hailstone in the sun. Your virtue is
> To make him worthy whose offence subdues him,
> And curse that justice did it. Who deserves greatness,
> Deserves your hate; and your affections are
> A sick man's appetite, who desires most that
> Which would increase his coil . . .
> . . . Hang ye! Trust ye!
> With every minute you do change a mind;
> And call him noble that was now your hate,
> Him vile that was your garland."

The facts of the play bear out every statement here made by Coriolanus, including the one that the plebeians are only brave with their tongues, and run as soon as it comes to blows. They turn tail on the first encounter with the Volscians.

> "*Marcius.* All the contagion of the south light on you,
> You shames of Rome! You herd of—Boils and plagues
> Plaster you o'er! that you may be abhorred
> Farther than seen, and one infest another
> Against the wind a mile! You souls of geese,
> That bear the shapes of men, how have you run
> From slaves that apes would beat! Pluto and hell!
> All hurt behind; backs red and faces pale
> With flight and agu'd fear!" (Act i. sc. 4).

By dint of threatening to draw his sword upon the runaways, he succeeds in driving them back to the attack, compels the enemy to retreat, and forces himself single-handed, like a demi-god or very god of war, through the gates of the town, which close upon him before his comrades can follow. When he comes forth again, bleeding, and the town is taken, his wrath thunders

afresh on finding that the only idea of the soldiery is to secure as much booty as possible:

> "See here these movers, that do prize their hours
> At a crack'd drachm! Cushions, leaden spoons,
> Irons of a doit, doublets that hangmen would
> Bury with those that wore them, these base slaves,
> Ere yet the fight be done, pack up:—Down with them!"

As far as Coriolanus is concerned the popular party is simply the body of those who "cannot rule nor ever will be ruled" (Act iii. sc. 1). The majority of nobles are too weak to venture to oppose the people's tribunes as they should, but Coriolanus, perceiving the danger of allowing these men to gain influence in the government of the city, courageously, if imprudently, braves their hatred in order to thwart and repress them (Act iii. sc. 1).

> "*First Senator.* No more words, we beseech you.
> *Coriolanus.* How! no more?
> As for my country I have shed my blood,
> Not fearing outward force, so shall my lungs
> Coin words till their decay, against those measels,
> Which we disdain should tetter us, yet sought
> The very way to catch them."

He further asserts that the people had not deserved the recent distribution of corn, for they had attempted to evade the summons to arms, and during the war they chiefly displayed their courage in mutinying. They had brought groundless accusations against the senate, and it was contemptible to allow them, out of fear of their numbers, any share in the government. His last words upon the subject are:

> ". . . This double worship,
> Where one part does disdain with cause, the other
> Insult without all reason; where gentry, title, wisdom,
> Cannot conclude but by the yea and no
> Of general ignorance,—it must omit
> Real necessities, and give way the while
> To unstable slightness: purpose so barr'd it follows,
> Nothing is done to purpose. . . ."

So, in *Troilus and Cressida*, would Ulysses, who represents all that is truly wise in statesmanship, have spoken. There is no

humane consideration for the oppressed condition of the poor, no just recognition of the right of those who bear the burden to have a voice in its distribution. That Shakespeare held the same political views as Coriolanus is amply shown by the fact that the most dissimilar characters approve of them in every particular, excepting only the violent and defiant manner in which they are expressed. Menenius' description of the tribunes of the people is not a whit less scathing than that of Marcius.

"Our very priests must become mockers, if they shall encounter such ridiculous subjects as you are. When you speak best unto the purpose, it is not worth the wagging of your beards; and your beards deserve not so honourable a grave as to stuff a butcher's cushion, or to be entombed in an ass's pack-saddle. Yet you must be saying, Marcius is proud, who, in a cheap estimation, is worth all your predecessors since Deucalion" (Act ii. sc. 1).

When Coriolanus's freedom of speech has procured his banishment, Menenius exclaims in admiration (Act iii. sc. 1):

> "*His nature is too noble for this world:*
> He would not flatter Neptune for his trident,
> Or Jove for 's power to thunder. His heart's his mouth."

Thus he is exiled for his virtues, not for his failings, and at heart they all agree with Menenius. When Coriolanus has gone over to the enemy, and their one anxiety is to appease his wrath, Cominius expresses the same view of the culpability of people and tribunes towards him (Act iv. sc. 4):

> "Who shall ask it?
> The tribunes cannot do 't for shame; the people
> Deserve such pity of him as the wolf
> Does of the shepherd."

Even the voice of one of the two serving-men of the Capitol exalts Coriolanus and justifies his scorn for the love or hatred of the people, the ignorant, bewildered masses—

". . . So that, if they love, they know not why, they hate upon no better a ground: therefore for Coriolanus neither to care whether they love or hate him manifests the true knowledge he has of their dispositions; and out of his noble carelessness lets them plainly see 't" (Act ii. sc. 2).

This is almost too well expressed for a servant; we perceive that the poet has taken no particular pains to disguise his own voice. The same man tells how well Coriolanus has deserved of his country; he did not rise, as some do, by standing hat in hand and bowing himself into favour with the people:

> ". . . But he hath so planted his honours in their eyes and his actions in their hearts, that for their tongues to be silent and not confess so much were a kind of ungrateful injury; to report otherwise were a malice, that giving itself to lie, would pluck reproof and rebuke from every ear that heard it."

This uncultured mind bears the same testimony as that of the most refined and intelligent patricians to the greatness of the hero. It is not difficult, I think, to follow the mental processes from which this work evolved. When Shakespeare came to reflect on what had constituted his chief gladness here on earth and made his melancholy life endurable to him, he found that his one lasting, if not too freely flowing, source of pleasure had been the friendship and appreciation of one or two noble and nobly-minded gentlemen.

For the people he felt nothing but scorn, and he was now, more than ever, incapable of seeing them as an aggregation of separate individualities, they were merged in the brutality which distinguished them in the mass. Humanity in general was to him not millions of individuals, but a few great entities amidst millions of non-entities. He saw more and more clearly that the existence of these few illustrious men was all that made life worth living, and the belief gave impetus to that hero-worship which had been characteristic of his early youth. Formerly, however, this worship had lacked its present polemical quality. The fact that Coriolanus was a great warrior made no particular impression on Shakespeare at this period; it was quite incidental, and he included it simply because he must. It was not the soldier that he wished to glorify but the demigod. His present impression of the circumstances and conditions of life is this: there must of necessity be formed around the solitary great ones of this earth a conspiracy of envy and hatred raised by the small and mean. As Coriolanus says, "Who deserves greatness, deserves your hate."

Owing to this turn of thought, Shakespeare found fewer heroes to worship; but his worship became the more intense,

and appears in this play in greater force than ever before. The patricians, who have a proper understanding of his merit, regard Coriolanus with a species of lover-like enthusiasm, a sort of adoration. When Marcius's mother tells Menenius that she has had a letter from her son, and adds, "And I think there's one at home for you," Menenius cries:

"I will make my very house reel to-night: a letter for me!

"*Virgilia.* Yes, certain, there's a letter for you; I saw't.

"*Menenius.* A letter for me! It gives me an estate of seven years' health; in which time I will make a lip at the physician: the most sovereign prescription in Galen is but empiricutic, and, to this preservative, of no better report than a horse-drench" (Act ii. sc. 1).

So speaks his friend; we will now listen to his bitterest enemy, Aufidius, the man whom he has defeated and humiliated in battle after battle, who hates him, and vows that neither temple nor prayer of priest, nor any of those things which usually restrain a man's wrath, shall prevail to soften him. He has sworn that wherever he may find his enemy, be it even on his own hearth, he will wash his hands in his heart's blood. But when Marcius forsakes Rome, and repairing to the Volscians, actually seeks Aufidius in his own home, upon his own hearth, we hear only the admiration and genuine enthusiasm which the sound of his voice and the mere majesty of his presence calls forth in the adversary who would gladly hate him, and still more gladly despise him if he could.

"O Marcius, Marcius!
Each word thou hast spoke hath weeded from my heart
A root of ancient envy. If Jupiter
Should from yond cloud speak divine things,
And say ''Tis true,' I'd not believe them more
Than thee, all noble Marcius. Let me twine
Mine arms about that body, where against
My grained ash an hundred times hath broke,
And scarred the moon with splinters: here I clip
The anvil of my sword, and do contest
As hotly and as nobly with thy love,
As ever in ambitious strength I did
Contend against thy valour. Know thou first,
I loved the maid I married; never man

Sighed truer breath; but that I see thee here,
Thou noble thing! more dances my rapt heart
Than when I first my wedded mistress saw
Bestride my threshold" (Act iv. sc. 5).

We have, then, in this play an almost wildly enthusiastic hero-worship upon a background of equally unqualified contempt for the populace. It is something different, however, from the humble devotion of his younger days to alien greatness (as in *Henry V.*), and is founded rather on an overpowering and defiant consciousness of his own worth and superiority.

The reader must recall the fact that his contemporaries looked upon Shakespeare not so much as a poet who earned his living as an actor, but as an actor who occasionally wrote plays. We must also remember that the profession of an actor was but lightly esteemed in those days, and the work of a dramatist was considered as a kind of inferior poetry, which scarcely ranked as literature. Probably most of Shakespeare's intimates considered his small narrative poems—his *Venus and Adonis*, his *Lucretia*, &c.—his real claim to notoriety, and they would regret that for the sake of money he had joined the ranks of the thousand and one dramatic writers. We are told in the dedication of *Histrio Mastix* (1634), that the playwrights of the day took no trouble with what they wrote, but covetously pillaged from old and new sources, "chronicles, legends, and romances."

Shakespeare did not even publish his own plays, but submitted to their appropriation by grasping booksellers, who published them with such a mutilation of the text, that it must have been a perfect terror to him to look at them. This mishandling of his plays would be so obnoxious to him, that it was not likely he would care to possess any copies. He was in much the same position in this respect as the modern author, who, unprotected by any law of international copyright, sees his works mangled and mutilated in foreign languages.

He would doubtless enjoy a certain amount of popularity, but he remained to the last an actor among actors (not even then in the first rank with Burbage) and a poet among poets. Never once did it occur to any of his contemporaries that he stood alone, and that all the others taken together were as nothing in comparison with him.

He lived and died one of the many.

That his spirit rose in silent but passionate rebellion against this judgment is obvious. Were there moments in which he clearly felt and keenly recognised his greatness? It must have been so, and these moments had grown more frequent of late. Were there also times when he said to himself, "Five hundred, a thousand years hence, my name will still be known to mankind and my plays read"? We cannot say; it hardly seems probable, or he would surely have contended for the right to publish his own works. We cannot doubt that he believed himself worthy at this time of such lasting fame, but he had, as we can well understand, no faith at all that future generations would see more clearly, judge more truly, and appraise more justly than his contemporaries. He had no idea of historical evolution, his belief was rather that the culture of his native country was rapidly declining. He had watched the growth of narrow-minded prejudice, had seen the triumphant progress of that pious stupidity which condemned his art as a wile of the devil; and his detestation of the mass of men, past, present, and to come, made him equally indifferent to their praise or blame. Therefore it pleased him to express this indifference through the medium of Coriolanus, the man who turns his back upon the senate when it eulogises him, and of whom Plutarch tells us that the one thing for which he valued his fame was the pleasure it gave his mother. Yet Shakespeare makes him say (Act i. sc. 9):

> "My mother,
> Who has a charter to extol her blood,
> When she does praise me grieves me."

Shakespeare has now broken with the judgments of mankind. He dwells on the cold heights above the snow-line, beyond human praise or blame, beyond the joys of fame and the perils of celebrity, breathing that keen atmosphere of indifference in which the soul hovers, upheld by scorn.

Some few on this earth are men, the rest are *spawn*, as Menenius calls them; and so Shakespeare sympathises with Coriolanus and honours him, endowing him with Cordelia's hatred of unworthy flattery, even placing her very words in his mouth (Act ii. sc. 2):

> "But your people
> I love them as they weigh."

Therefore it is he equips his hero with the same stern devotion to truth with which, later in the century, Molière endows his Alceste, but, instead of in the semi-farcical, it is in the wholly heroic manner (Act iii. sc. 3):

> "Let them pronounce the steep Tarpeian death,
> Vagabond exile, flaying, pent to linger
> But with a grain a day. I would not buy
> Their mercy at the price of one fair word."

We see Shakespeare's whole soul with Coriolanus when he cannot bring himself to ask the Consulate of the people in requital of his services. Let them freely give him his reward, but that he should have to ask for it—torture!

When his friends insist upon his conforming to custom and appearing in person as applicant, Shakespeare, who has hitherto followed Plutarch step by step, here diverges, in order to represent this step as being excessively disagreeable to Marcius. According to the Greek historian, Coriolanus at once proceeds with a splendid retinue to the Forum, and there displays the wounds he has received in the recent wars; but Shakespeare's hero cannot bring himself to boast of his exploits to the people, nor to appeal to their admiration and compassion by making an exhibition of his wounds:

> "I cannot
> Put on the gown, stand naked, and entreat them,
> For my wounds' sake, to give their suffrage: please you
> That I may pass this doing" (Act ii. sc. 2).

He finally yields, but has hardly set foot in the Forum before he begins to curse at the position in which he has placed himself:

> "What must I say?
> 'I pray, sir'—Plague upon't! I cannot bring
> My tongue to such a pace:—'Look, sir, my wounds!
> I got them in my country's service when
> Some certain of your brethren roared and ran
> From the noise of our own drums'" (Act ii. sc. 3).

He makes an effort to control himself, and, turning brusquely to the nearest bystanders, he addresses them with ill-concealed

irony. On being asked what has induced him to stand for the Consulate, he hastily and rashly replies:

"Mine own desert.

"*Second Citizen.* Your own desert!

"*Coriolanus.* Ay, but not mine own desire.

"*Third Citizen.* How not your own desire?

"*Coriolanus.* No, sir, 'twas never my desire to trouble the poor with begging."

Having secured a few votes in this remarkably tactless manner, he exclaims:

"Most sweet voices!
Better to die, better to starve,
Than crave the hire which first we do deserve."

When the intrigues of the tribunes succeed in inducing the people to revoke his election, he so far forgets himself in his fury at the insult that they are enabled to pronounce sentence of banishment against him. He then bursts into an outbreak of taunts and threats: "You common cry of curs! I banish *you!*" —which recalls how some thousand years later another chosen of the people and subsequent object of democratic jealousy, Gambetta, thundered at the noisy assembly at Belleville: "Cowardly brood! I will follow you up into your very dens."

The nature of the material and the whole conception of the play required that the pride of Coriolanus should occasionally be expressed with repellant arrogance. But we feel, through all the intentional artistic exaggeration of the hero's self-esteem, how there arose in Shakespeare's own soul, from the depth of his stormy contempt for humanity, a pride immeasurably pure and steadfast.

XII

CORIOLANUS AS A DRAMA

THE tragedy of *Coriolanus* is constructed strictly according to rule; the plot is simple and powerful, and is developed, with steadily increasing interest, to a logical climax. With the exception of *Othello*, Shakespeare has never treated his material in a more simply intelligible fashion. It is the tragedy of an inviolably truthful personality in a world of small-minded folk; the tragedy of the punishment a reckless egoism incurs when it is betrayed into setting its own pride above duty to state and fatherland.

Shakespeare's aristocratic sympathies did not blind him to Coriolanus' unjustifiable crime and its inevitable consequences. Infuriated by his banishment, the great soldier goes over to the enemies of Rome and leads the Volscian army against his native city, plundering and terrifying as he goes. He spurns the humble entreaties of his friends, and only yields to the women of the city when, led by his mother and his wife, they come to implore mercy and peace.

Coriolanus' fierce outburst when the name of traitor is flung at him proves that Shakespeare did not look upon treason as a pardonable crime:

> "The fires of the lowest hell fold in your people!
> Call me their traitor!—Thou injurious tribune!
> Within thine eyes sat twenty thousand deaths,
> In thy hands clutched as many millions, in
> Thy lying tongue both numbers, I would say
> 'Thou liest,' unto thee, with a voice as free
> As I do pray the gods" (Act iii. sc. 3).

Immediately after this his outraged pride leads him to commit the very crime he has so wrathfully disclaimed. No consideration for his country or fellow-citizens can restrain him. The

forces which arrest his vengeance are the mother he has worshipped all his life and the wife he tenderly loves. He knows that it is himself he is offering up when he sacrifices his rancour on the altar of his family. The Volscians will never forgive him for delivering up their triumph to Rome after he had practically delivered up Rome to them. And so he perishes, finally overtaken by Aufidius' long-accumulated jealousy acting through the disappointed rage of the Volscians. In Plutarch Shakespeare found his plot and the chief characters of his play ready to hand. He added the individuality of the tribunes and of Menenius (with the exception of the parable of the belly). Virgilia, who is little more than a name in the original, Shakespeare has transformed by one of his own wonderful touches into a woman whose chief charm lies in the quiet gentleness of her nature. "My gracious silence, hail!" thus Marcius greets her (Act ii. sc. 1), and she is exhaustively defined in the exclamation. Her principal utterances, as well as Volumnia's most important speeches, are mere versifications of Plutarch's prose, and this is why these women have so much genuinely Roman blood in their veins. Volumnia is the true Roman matron of the days of the Republic. Shakespeare has wrought her character with special care, and her rich and powerful personality is not without its darker side. Her kinship with her son is perceptible in all her ways and words. She is more prone, as a woman, to employ, or at least approve of, dissimulation, but her nature is not a whit less defiantly haughty. Her first thought may be jesuitical; her second is always violent:

> "*Vol.* Oh, sir, sir, sir,
> I would have had you put your power well on,
> Before you had worn it out.
> *Cor.* Let go.
> *Vol.* You might have been enough the man you are,
> With striving less to be so: lesser had been
> The thwartings of your dispositions, *if*
> *You had not showed them how ye were disposed*
> *Ere they lacked power to cross you.*
> *Cor.* Let them hang.
> *Vol. Ay, and burn too*" (Act iii. sc. 2).

When matters come to a climax, she shows no more discretion in her treatment of the tribunes than did her son, but displays

precisely the same power of vituperation. On reading her speeches we realise the satisfaction and relief it was to Shakespeare to vent himself in furious invectives through the medium of his dramatic creations:

> "*Vol.* . . . Hadst thou foxship
> To banish him that struck more blows for Rome
> Than thou hast spoken words?
> *Sic.* O blessèd heavens!
> *Vol.* More noble blows, than ever thou wise words;
> And for Rome's good. I'll tell thee what; yet go:
> Nay, but thou shalt stay too: I would my son
> Were in Arabia, and thy tribe before him,
> His good sword in his hand" (Act iv. sc. 2).

A comparison between Volumnia's final appeal to her son in the last act and the speech as it is given in Plutarch is of the greatest interest. Shakespeare has followed his author step by step, but has enriched him by the addition of the most artlessly human touches:

> "There's no man in the world
> More bound to's mother; yet here he lets me prate
> Like one i' the stocks. Thou hast never in thy life
> Showed thy dear mother any courtesy;
> When she, (poor hen!) fond of no second brood,
> Has clucked thee to the wars and safely home,
> Loaden with honour" (Act v. sc. 3).

How the stern, soldierly bearing of the woman is softened by these touches with which Shakespeare has embellished her portrait!

The diction both here and throughout the play is that of Shakespeare's most matured period; but never before had he used bolder similes, shown more independence in his method of expression, nor condensed so much thought and feeling into so few lines. We have already drawn attention to the masterly handling of his material—a handling, however, which by no means precludes the intrusion of several extravagances, some heroic, some simply childish.

The hero's bodily strength and courage, for example, are strained to the mythical. He forces his way single-handed into a hostile town, holds his own there against a whole army, and finally makes good his retreat, wounded but not subdued. Even

Bible tradition, in which divine aid comes to the rescue, cannot furnish forth such deeds. Neither Samson's escape from Gaza (Judges xvi.) nor David's from Keilah (1 Sam. xxiii.) can compare with this amazing exploit.

Equally unlikely is the foolishly defiant and arrogant attitude assumed by the senate, and more especially by Coriolanus, towards the plebeian party. Upon what do the nobles rely to support them in such an attitude? They have already been compelled to yield the political power of tribuneship, and it never even occurred to them to defy the sentence of banishment pronounced by these same tribunes. How comes it then that they seize every opportunity to taunt and scorn? How is it that these patricians, who have spoken so many brave words, make so poor a show of resistance when the Volscians are at their gates? They are so steeped in party spirit that their first thought, when defeat comes upon them, is to rejoice in the confusion and discomfiture the plebeians have brought upon themselves, and finally, abandoning all self-respect, they crawl to the feet of their exasperated conqueror.

The confusion of Shakespeare's authority in this part of the story would account for much.[1] According to Plutarch, Coriolanus, in the course of his victorious march from one Latin town to another, plunders the plebeians, but spares the patricians. A sudden change of public opinion occurs in Rome during his siege of Lavinium, and the popular party desires to recall Coriolanus, but the senate refuses—why, we are not told. The enemy is close upon them before a parley is agreed upon. Coriolanus offers easy terms, the admission of the Volscians to the Latin Federation being the chief stipulation. Despite the general feeling of discouragement in Rome, the senate answers haughtily that Romans will never yield to fear, and the Volscians must first lay down their arms if they desire to obtain a "favour." Directly after this defiance they make the most abject submission, and send their women as suppliants to the hostile camp.

While Shakespeare's Coriolanus has none of this consideration for his former friends, his patricians are as cowardly and incapable as the historian's. Cominius, Titus Lartius, and the others, who are originally represented as valiant men, make a very poor

[1] The matter is interestingly discussed in Kreyssig's instructive and sympathetic work: *Vorlesungen über Shakespeare*, 1859, vol. ii. p. 110.

show at the end. Several, in short, of Plutarch's abundant contradictions have found their way into Shakespeare's play; they mark the beginning of a certain inconsequence which henceforward betrays itself in his work. From this point onwards his plays are no longer as highly finished as formerly.

I am not alluding here to the inconsistencies of his hero, for they only serve to give life and truth to his character, and the poet either represented them unconsciously, or was too ingenuous to avoid them; witness the reflection made by Coriolanus at the very moment of his rebellious disinclination to ask the suffrages of the people:

> "Custom calls me to't;
> What custom wills, in all things should we do't,
> The dust on antique time would lie unswept,
> And mountainous error be too highly heapt
> For truth to o'er-peer" (Act ii. sc. 3).

Coriolanus is utterly unconscious that this speech of his strikes at the very root of that ultra-conservatism which he affects. The very thing he has refused to understand is, that if we invariably followed custom, the follies of the past would never be swept away, nor the rocks which hinder our progress burst asunder. To Coriolanus, what is customary is right, and he never realises the fact that his disdain for the tribunes and people has led him into a politically untenable position. We are by no means sure that Shakespeare's perceptions in this case were any keener than his hero's; but, consciously or unconsciously, it is this very inconsistency in Coriolanus' character which makes it so vividly lifelike.

Troilus and Cressida overflowed with contempt for the feminine sex as such, for love as a comical or pitiable sensuality, for mock heroics and sham military glory. *Coriolanus* is brimful of scorn for the masses; for the stupidity, fickleness, and cowardice of the ignorant, slavish souls, and for the baseness of their leaders.

But the passionate disdain possessing Shakespeare's soul is destined to a stronger and wilder outburst in the work he next takes in hand. The outbreak in *Timon* is against no one sex, no one caste, no one nation or fraction of humanity; it is the result of an overwhelming contempt, which excepts nothing and no one, but embraces the whole human race.

XIII

TIMON OF ATHENS—HATRED OF MANKIND

TIMON OF ATHENS has come down to us in a pitiable condition. The text is in a terrible state, and there are, not only between one scene and another, but between one page and another, such radical differences in the style and general spirit of the play as to preclude the possibility of its having been the work of one man. The threads of the story are often entirely disconnected, and circumstances occur (or are referred to) for which we were in no way prepared. The best part of the versification is distinctly Shakespearian, and contains all that wealth of thought which was characteristic of this period of his life; but the other parts are careless, discordant, and desperately monotonous. The prose dialogue especially jars, thrust as it is, with its long-winded straining after effect, into scenes which are otherwise compact and vigorous.

All Shakespeare students of the present day concur in the opinion that *Timon of Athens*, like *Pericles*, is but a great fragment from the master-hand.

The *Lyfe of Timon of Athens* was printed for the first time in the old folio edition of 1623. Careful examination shows us that the first pages of the play of *Timon* (which is inserted between *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Cæsar*) are numbered 80, 81, 82, 81, instead of 78, 79, 80, 81, and end at page 98. The names of the actors, for which in no other case is more than the necessary space allowed, here occupy the whole of page 99, and page 100 is left blank. *Julius Cæsar* begins upon the next page, which is numbered 109. Fleay noticed that *Troilus and Cressida*, which, as we remarked, is unnumbered, would exactly fill the pages 78 to 108. By some error, which furnishes us with another hint, the second and third pages of this play are numbered 79 and 80. Obviously it was the publisher's original intention to

include *Troilus and Cressida* among the tragedies. On its being subsequently observed that there was nothing really tragic about the play, they cast about, since *Julius Cæsar* was already printed, for another tragedy which would as nearly as possible fill the vacant space.

Shakespeare found the material for *Timon of Athens* in the course of his reading for *Antony and Cleopatra.* There is, in Plutarch's "Life of Antony," a brief sketch of Timon and his misanthropy, his relations with Alcibiades and the Cynic Apemantus, the anecdote of the fig-tree, and the two epitaphs. The subject evidently attracted Shakespeare by its harmony with his own distraught and excited frame of mind at the time. He was soon absorbed in it, and in some form or another he made acquaintance with Lucian's hitherto untranslated dialogue *Timon,* which contained many incidents giving fulness to the story, and from which he appropriated the discovery of the treasure, the consequent return of the parasitic friends, and Timon's scornful treatment of them.

Shakespeare probably found these details in some old play on the same subject. Dyce published, in 1842, an old drama on Timon which had been found in manuscript, and was judged by Steevens to date from 1600, or thereabouts. It seems to have been written for some academic circle, and in it we find the faithful steward and the farewell banquet with which the third act closes. In the older drama, instead of warm water, Timon throws stones, painted to resemble artichokes, at his guests. Some trace of these stones may be found in these lines in Shakespeare's play:

> "*Second Lord.* Lord Timon's mad.
> *Third Lord.* I feel't upon my bones.
> *Fourth Lord.* One day he gives us diamonds, next day stones."

In the old play, when Timon finds the gold, and his faithless mistress and friends flock around him once more, he repulses them, crying:

> "Why vexe yee me, yee Furiés? I protest,
> and all the Gods to witnesse invocate,
> I doe abhorre the titles of a friende,
> of father, or companion. I curse
> the aire yee breathe, I lothe to breathe that air."

He naïvely intimates a change of mind in the epilogue:

> "I now am left alone: this rascall route
> hath left my side. What's this? I feele through out
> a sodeine change: my fury doth abate,
> my hearte grows milde and lays aside its hate;"

and concludes with a still more ingenuous appeal for applause:

> "Let loving hands, loude sounding in the ayre,
> cause Timon to the citty to repaire."

We have no proof that Shakespeare was acquainted with this particular work. He probably used some other contemporary play, belonging to the theatre, which had proved a failure in its original form, and which both his company and his own inclinations urged him to thoroughly recast. It was not so entirely rewritten, however, that we can look upon the play as actually the work of Shakespeare—there are too many traces of another and a feebler hand; but the vital, lyrical, powerful pathos is his, and his alone.

There are two theories on this subject. Fleay, in his well-known and thorough investigation of the matter, endeavours to prove that the original scheme was Shakespeare's, but that some inferior hand amplified it for acting purposes. Fleay selected all the indubitably Shakespearian portions, and had them printed as a separate play, contending that it not only included all that was of any value (which will scarcely be disputed), but that, on the score of intelligibility, none of the rejected speeches were needed.[1] Swinburne, who scarcely ever agrees with Fleay, also shares the belief that Shakespeare used no ready-made groundwork for his play. His first opinion was that *Timon of Athens* was interrupted by Shakespeare's premature death, but later he inclined to the theory that, after working upon it for some time, the poet laid it aside as being little suited to dramatic treatment. Swinburne does not undervalue the work done by Shakespeare on that account, but remarks, on the contrary, that, had Juvenal been gifted with the inspiration of Æschylus, he might have written just such another tragedy as the fourth act of the drama.[2]

The theory that Shakespeare made use of a finished play

[1] *New Shakespeare Society's Transactions*, 1874, pp. 130–194.
[2] Swinburne: *A Study of Shakespeare*, pp. 212–215.

which he only partially rewrote, leaving the rest in its clumsy imperfection, was originally propounded by the English critics Sympson and Knight. It was first attacked and afterwards eagerly supported by Delius, who gives the reasons for his change of opinion at great length.[1] H. A. Evans, the commentator of the Irving edition, also shares this latter view. There is no dispute between the two parties concerning the portions written by Shakespeare; the contention is simply this: Did Shakespeare remodel another man's play, or did another man complete his?

As Fleay's attempt to construct a connected and intelligible play from the Shakespearian fragments failed, because a great part of the weak and spurious matter is absolutely necessary to the coherence of the whole, it certainly seems more reasonable to accept Shakespeare as the reviser. Some of the English critics incline to the opinion that the inferior scenes were the work of the contemporary poets George Wilkins and John Day.

After a lapse of nearly 300 years it is impossible to give any decided opinion on the matter, more especially for a critic whose mother tongue is not English. In these days of occultism and spiritualism the simplest way out of the difficulty would be for some of those favoured individuals, who hold communion with the other world by means of small tables and pencils, to induce Shakespeare himself to settle the matter once for all. Meanwhile we must be content with probabilities. To those who only know the work through translations, or to those who, like Gervinus and Kreyssig, the German critics, have not devoted sufficient attention to the language, the necessity of assuming a second writer may not be so obvious. It is not impossible, of course, that the feeble, prosy, and longwinded parts were written by Shakespeare, roughly sketched in such a fit of despondency and utter indifference to detail that he could not force himself to revise, re-write, and condense; but the possibility is an exceedingly remote one. We know how finely Shakespeare generally constructed his plays, even in the first rough draft.

The drama, as it stands, presents the picture of a thoughtlessly and extravagantly open-handed nature, whose one unfailing pleasure is to give. King Lear only gave away his possessions once, and then in his old age and to his daughters; but Timon

[1] *Jarbuch der deutschen Shakespearegesellschaft*, iii. pp. 334–361.

daily bestows money and jewels upon all and sundry. At the opening of the play he is, without appearing to be personally luxurious, living in the midst of all the voluptuousness with which a Mæcenas, in the gayest of all the world's gay capitals, could surround himself. Artists and merchants flock round the generous patron who pays them more than they ask. A chorus of sycophants sing his praises day and night. It is but natural that, under those circumstances, a carelessly good-natured temperament should look upon society as a circle for the exchange of friendly services, which it is equally honourable to render or receive.

He pays no heed to the faithful steward who warns him that this life cannot last. He no more disturbs himself about the melting of his money from his coffers than if he were living in a communistic society with the general wealth at his disposal.

At last the tide of fortune turns. His coffers are empty; the steward is no longer able to find him money to fling away, and Timon must go a borrowing in his turn. Almost before the report of his ruin has had time to spread, bills come pouring in, and his impatient creditors, yesterday his comrades, send messengers for their money. All his requests for a loan are refused by his former friends—one on the ground of his own poverty, while another professes to be offended because he was not applied to in the first instance, and a third will not even lend a portion of the large sums Timon has but lately lavished upon him.

Timon has hitherto been one of fortune's favourites, but now the true nature of the world is suddenly revealed to him, as it was to Hamlet and King Lear. Like theirs, but far more harshly and bitterly, his former confiding simplicity is replaced by frantic pessimism. Wishing to show his false friends all the contempt he feels for them, Timon invites them to a final banquet, and they, supposing that he has recovered his wealth, attend with excuses on their lips for their recent behaviour. The table is sumptuously spread, but the covered dishes contain only warm water, which Timon disdainfully flings in the faces of his guests.

He cuts himself adrift from all intercourse with mankind, and retreats to the woods to lead the solitary life of a Stoic. The half-jesting retirement of Jaques in *As You Like It*, and his dismissal of all who trouble his solitude, are here carried out in grim earnest.

It is not for long that he remains poor, for he has hardly begun to dig for the roots on which he lives than he finds treasure buried in the earth. Unlike Lucian's misanthrope, who rejoices in the possession of gold as a means of securing a life free from care, Shakespeare's Timon sickens at the sight of his wealth. Neither does he care for the honourable amends made by his countrymen. We learn it so late in the day that we can scarcely believe that Timon was formerly a skilful general, who had done good service to his country. This feature is taken from Lucian, and the character of the luxurious Mæcenas would have gained in interest and nobility if this trait had been impressed upon us earlier in the play. The senate, meanwhile, being threatened with war, offers Timon the sole command. He proudly rejects the overtures made by these misers and usurers in purple, and even remains unsoftened by the faithful devotion of his steward. He anathematises every one and all things, and returns to his cave to die by his own hand.

The non-Shakespearian elements of the play do not prevent his genius and master-hand from pervading the whole, and it is easy to see how this work grew out of the one immediately preceding it, to trace the connecting links between the two plays.

When Coriolanus is exasperated by the ingratitude of the plebeians, he joins the enemies of his country and people, and becomes the assailant of his native city. When Timon falls a victim to the thanklessness of those he has loaded with benefits, his hatred embraces the whole human race. The contrast is very suggestive. The despair of Coriolanus is of an active kind, driving him to deeds and placing him at the head of an army. Timon's is of the passive sort: he merely curses and shuns mankind. It is not until the discovery of the treasure determines him to use his wealth in spreading corruption and misery that his hatred takes a semi-practical form. This contrast was not an element of the drama until Shakespeare made it so.

The whole conduct of his Alcibiades forms a complete parallel to that of Coriolanus, and here again the connection between the two plays is obvious. Shakespeare found a brief account of the mutual relations of Timon and Alcibiades in North's translation of Plutarch's "Life of Antony," together with a description of Timon's good-will towards the general on account of the calamities that he foresaw he would bring upon the Athenians. The

name of Alcibiades would not recall to Shakespeare, as it does to us, the most glorious period of Greek culture, and such names as Pericles, Aristophanes, and Plato—he generally gives Latin names to his Greeks, such as Lucius, Flavius, Servilius, &c.; nor did it represent to him the unrivalled subtlety, charm, instability, and reckless extravagance of the man. He would read Plutarch's comparison of Alcibiades and Coriolanus, in which the Greek and Roman generals are considered homogeneous, and for Shakespeare Alcibiades was merely the soldier and commander; on that account he let him occupy much the same relation to Timon that Fortinbras did to Hamlet.

Where Timon merely hates, Alcibiades seizes his weapons; and when Timon curses indiscriminately, Alcibiades punishes severely but deliberately. He does not tear down the city walls and put every tenth citizen to the sword, as he is invited to do; he only seeks vengeance on his personal enemies and those whom he considers guilty. But Timon, like Hamlet, generalises his bitter experiences, and loathes everything that bears the form or name of man. When Athens sends to entreat him to take the command and save the city from the violence of Alcibiades, he is harder and colder, and a hundred times more bitterly relentless, than Coriolanus, who, after all, could bow to entreaty, or than Alcibiades, who is satisfied with a strictly limited vengeance. Timon's loathing of life and hatred of humanity is consistent throughout.

Like *Coriolanus*, this play was undoubtedly written in a frame of mind which prompted Shakespeare less to abandon himself to the waves of imagination than to dwell upon the worthlessness of mankind, and the scornful branding of the contemptible. There is even less inventiveness here than in *Coriolanus:* the plot is not only simple, it is scanty—more appropriate to a parable or didactic poem than a drama. Most of the characters are merely abstractly representative of their class or profession, *e.g.* the Poet, the Painter, the servants, the false friends, the flatterers, the creditors and mistresses. They are simply employed to give prominence to the principal figure, or rather, to a great lyrical outburst of bitterness, scorn, and execration.

In the poet's description of his work in the first scene of the play, Shakespeare has indicated his point of view with unusual precision:

"I have, in this rough work, shaped out a man
Whom this beneath world doth embrace and hug
With amplest entertainment. . . .
. . . His large fortune,
Upon his good and gracious nature hanging,
Subdues and properties to his love and tendance
All sorts of hearts."

He unfolds an allegory in which Fortune is represented as enthroned upon a high and pleasant hill, from whose base all kinds of people are struggling upwards to better their condition:

"Amongst them all
Whose eyes are on this sovereign lady fixed,
One do I personate of lord Timon's fame,
Whom Fortune with her ivory hand wafts to her;
Whose present grace to present slaves and servants
Translates his rivals."

The Painter justly observes that the allegory of the hill and the enthroned Fortune could be equally well expressed in a picture as a poem, but the Poet continues:

"When Fortune, in her shift and change of mood,
Spurns down her late beloved, all his dependants,
Which laboured after him to the mountain's top,
Even on their knees and hands, let him slip down,
Not one accompanying his declining foot."

Shakespeare has defined his purpose here as clearly as did Daudet, some hundreds of years later, in the first chapter of his *Sappho*, in which the whole course of the story is symbolised in the ever-increasing difficulty with which the hero mounts the stairs, carrying the heroine to the highest story of the house in which he lives. The bitterness of Shakespeare's mood is shown in the distinct indication that the Poet and the Painter, rogues and toadies as they are, stand in the first ranks of their professions, and cannot, therefore, claim the excuse of poverty. It is significant of the dramatist's low opinion of his fellow-craftsmen —not one of them is mentioned in his will—that he should make his Poet most eloquent in condemnation of his own peculiar faults. Hence Timon's ejaculation in the last act:

"Must thou needs stand for a villain in thine own work
Wilt thou whip thine own faults in other men?"

In *Timon*, as in *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare put his own thoughts and feelings into the mouths of the various characters of the play. Falseness and ingratitude are the subjects of the most frequent allusion. They were uppermost in the poet's mind at the time, and the changes are rung upon these vices by the Epicurean and the Cynic, by servants and strangers, before and after the climax. Even the fickle Poet serves, as we have seen, as spokesman for the all-prevailing idea; and the Painter, who is every whit as worthless, says with droll irony (Act v. sc. 1):

"Promising is the very air o' the time: it opens the eyes of expectation: performance is ever the duller for his act; and, but in the plainer and simpler kind of people, the deed of saying is quite out of use. To promise is most courtly and fashionable: performance is a kind of will or testament, which argues a great sickness in his judgment that makes it."

If there was one thing Shakespeare loathed above another, it was the lifeless ceremony which disguises hollowness and fraud. Early in the play (Act i. sc. 2) Timon says to his guests:

"Nay, my lords,
Ceremony was but devised at first
To set a gloss on faint deeds, hollow welcomes,
Recanting goodness, sorry ere 'tis shown;
But where there is true friendship, there needs none."

Although Apemantus is the converse of Timon at every point—coarse where he is refined, mean where he is generous, and base where he is noble—yet in his first monologue the Cynic also strikes the keynote of the piece (Act i. sc. 2):

"We make ourselves fools, to disport ourselves;
And spend our flatteries, to drink those men
Upon whose age we void it up again,
With poisonous spite and envy.
Who lives, that's not depravèd or depraves?
Who dies, that bears not one spurn to their graves
Of their friend's gift?"

The first stranger says in a speech, whose monotony betrays the fact that it was not entirely Shakespeare's although he has retouched it in several places (notably the italicised lines):

"Who can call him
His friend that dips in the same dish? for, in

My knowing, Timon hath been this lord's father,
And kept his credit with his purse;
Supported his estate; nay, Timon's money
Has paid his men their wages: *he ne'er drinks,*
But Timon's silver treads upon his lip;
And yet, (oh, see the monstrousness of man
When he looks out in an ungrateful shape!)
He does deny him in respect of his,
What charitable men afford to beggars" (Act iii. sc. 2).

Finally, like the serving-man in the Capitol, who expresses his approval of Coriolanus' self-conceit, Timon's servant, when his application for a loan is refused, says:

"The devil knew not what he did when he made man politic; he crossed himself by 't: and I cannot think but, in the end, the villainies of men will set him clear. How fairly this lord strives to appear foul! takes virtuous copies to be wicked; *like those that, under hot, ardent zeal, would set whole realms on fire.*"

This direct, unmistakable attack upon Puritanism has a remarkable effect coming from the lips of a Grecian servant, and we may gather from it some idea of the general aim of all these outbursts against hypocrisy.

We must now, with a view to defining the non-Shakespearian elements of the play, devote some attention to its dual authorship. In the first act it is particularly the prose dialogues between Apemantus and others which seem unworthy of Shakespeare. The repartee is laconic but laboured—not always witty, though invariably bitter and disdainful. The style somewhat resembles that of the colloquies between Diogenes and Alexander in Lyly's *Alexander and Campaspe.* The first of Apemantus' conversations might have been written by Shakespeare—it seems to have some sort of continuity with the utterances of Thersites in *Troilus and Cressida*—but the second has every appearance of being either an interpolation by a strange hand, or a scene which Shakespeare had forgotten to score out. Flavius's monologue (Act i. sc. 2) never came from Shakespeare's pen in this form. Its marked contrast to the rest shows that it might be the outcome of notes taken by some blundering shorthand writer among the audience.

The long conversation, in the second act, between Apemantus,

the Fool, Caphis, and various servants, was, in all probability, written by an alien hand. It contains nothing but idle chatter devised to amuse the gallery, and it introduces characters who seem about to take some standing in the play, but who vanish immediately, leaving no trace. A Page comes with messages and letters from the mistress of a brothel, to which the Fool appears to belong, but we are told nothing of the contents of these letters, whose addresses the bearer is unable to read.

In the third act there is much that is feeble and irrelevant, together with an aimless unrest which incessantly pervades the stage. It is not until the banqueting scene towards the end of the act that Shakespeare makes his presence felt in the storm which bursts from Timon's lips. The powerful fourth act displays Shakespeare at his best and strongest; there is very little here which could be attributed to alien sources. I cannot understand the decision with which English critics (including a poet like Tennyson) have condemned as spurious Flavius's monologue at the close of the second scene. Its drift is that of the speech in the following scene, in which he expresses the whole spirit of the play in one line: "What viler things upon the earth than friends!" Although there is evidently some confusion in the third scene (for example, the intimation of the Poet's and Painter's appearance long before they really arrive), I cannot agree with Fleay that Shakespeare had no share in the passage contained between the lines, "Where liest o' nights, Timon?" and "Thou art the cap of all the fools alive."

One speech in particular betrays the master-hand. It is that in which Timon expresses the wish that Apemantus's desire to become a beast among beasts may be fulfilled:

> "If thou wert the lion, the fox would beguile thee: if thou wert the lamb, the fox would eat thee: if thou wert the fox, the lion would suspect thee when, peradventure, thou wert accused by the ass: if thou wert the ass, thy dulness would torment thee: and still thou livedst but as a breakfast to the wolf: if thou wert the wolf, thy greediness would afflict thee, and oft thou shouldst hazard thy life for thy dinner."

There is as much knowledge of life here as in a concentrated essence of all Lafontaine's fables.

The last scenes of the fifth act were evidently never revised by Shakespeare. It is a comical incongruity that makes the

soldier who, we are expressly told, is unable to read, capable of distinguishing Timon's tomb, and even of having the forethought to take a wax impression of the words. There is also an amalgamation of the two contradictory inscriptions, of which the first tells us that the dead man wishes to remain nameless and unknown, while the last two lines begin with the declaration, "Here lie I, Timon." Notwithstanding the shocking condition of the text, the repeatedly occurring confusion of the action, and the evident marks of an alien hand, Shakespeare's leading idea and dominant purpose is never for a moment obscured. Much in *Timon* reminds us of *King Lear*, the injudiciously distributed benefits and the ingratitude of their recipients are the same, but in the former the bitterness and virulence are tenfold greater, and the genius incontestably less. Lear is supported in his misfortunes by the brave and manly Kent, the faithful Fool, that truest of all true hearts, Cordelia, her husband, the valiant King of France. There is but one who remains faithful to Timon, a servant, which in those days meant a slave, whose self-sacrificing devotion forces his master, sorely against his will, to except one man from his universal vituperation. In his own class he does not meet with a single honestly devoted heart, either man's or woman's; he has no daughter, as Lear; no mother, as Coriolanus; no friend, not one.

How far more fortunate was Antony! It is a corrupt world in the process of dissolution that we find in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Most of it is rotten or false, but the passion binding the two principal characters together by its magic is entirely genuine. Perdican's profound speech in De Musset's "*On ne badine pas avec l'amour*" applies both to them and the whole play: "Tous les hommes sont menteurs, inconstants, faux, bavards, hypocrites, orgueilleux; toutes les femmes sont artificieuses, perfides, vaniteuses; le monde n'est qu'un égout sans fond; mais il y au monde une chose sainte et sublime, c'est l'union de deux de ces êtres imparfaits." This simple fact, that Antony and Cleopatra love one another, ennobles and purifies them both, and consoles us, the spectators, for the disaster their passion brings upon them. Timon has no mistress, no relation with the other sex, only contempt for it.

There is a significant revelation of the crudity and stupidity with which, even before the end of the seventeenth century,

Shakespeare's admirers made free with him, in an adaptation which Shadwell published in 1678 under the title "The History of Timon the Man Hater into a Play." In this Timon is represented as deserting his mistress Evandra, by whom he is passionately loved to the last. This introduction of a sympathetic woman's character naturally secured the play a success which was never attained by Shakespeare's hero, a solitary misanthrope alone with his bitterness. Shakespeare has intentionally veiled the defects of nature and judgment which deprive Timon to some extent of our sympathy, both in his prosperity and his misfortunes. He had never in his bright days attached himself so warmly to any heart that he felt it beat in unison with his own. Had he ever been powerfully drawn to a single friend, he would not have squandered his possessions so lightly on all the world. Because he only loved mankind in the mass, he now hates them in the mass. He never, now as then, shows any powers of discrimination.

Shakespeare merely used him as a well-known example of the punishment simple-minded trustfulness brings upon itself; his indiscretion is the outcome of native nobility, and his wrath is perfectly justifiable. We feel that Timon possesses the poet's sympathy and compassion, even when his abhorrence of humanity passes the bounds of hatred, and becomes a passion for its annihilation. Timon turns hermit in order to escape from the sight of human beings, and this misanthropy is no mere mask worn to conceal his despair at the loss of this world's goods, since it stands the test of the finding of the treasure. He no longer looks upon wealth as the means of procuring pleasure, but only as an instrument of vengeance. It is for that, and that alone, that he rejoices when the "yellow glittering, precious gold" falls into his hands:

> "Why, this
> Will lug your priests and servants from your sides,
> . . . Make the hoar leprosy adored, place thieves
> And give them title, knee, and approbation
> With senators on the bench; this is it
> That makes the wappened widow wed again;
> She whom the spital-house and ulcerous sores
> Would cast the gorge at, this embalms and spices
> To the April day again" (Act iv. sc. 3).

When Alcibiades, who was formerly on friendly terms with him and has retained some kindly feeling towards him, disturbs his solitude by a visit, Timon receives him with the exclamation:

"The canker gnaw thy heart
For showing me again the eyes of man!
Alcibiades. What is thy name? Is man so hateful to thee
That art thyself a man?
Timon. I am Misanthropos, and hate mankind.
For thy part, I do wish thou wert a dog
That I might love thee something" (Act iv. sc. 3).

So might old Schopenhauer, with his loathing for men and his love for dogs, have expressed himself. Timon explains this hatred as the result of a dispassionate insight into the worthlessness of human nature:

"For every guise of fortune
Is smoothed by that below: the learned pate
Ducks to the golden fool: all is oblique;
There's nothing level in our cursèd natures
But direct villany."

When Alcibiades, who appears in company with two hetæræ, addresses Timon in friendly fashion, the latter turns to abuse one of the women, declaring that she carries more destruction with her than the soldier does in his sword. She retorts, and he rails at her in the fashion of *Troilus and Cressida.* In his eyes the wanton woman is merely the disseminator of disease, and he expresses the hope that she may bring many a young man to sickness and misery. Alcibiades offers to serve him:

"Noble Timon,
What friendship may I do thee?
Timon. None, but to maintain my opinion.
Alcibiades. What is it, Timon?
Timon. Promise me friendship, but perform none."

When Alcibiades informs him that he is leading his army against Athens, Timon prays that the gods will give him the victory, in order that he may exterminate the people root and branch, and himself afterwards. He gives him gold for his war, and conjures him to rage like a pestilence:

"Let not thy sword skip one:
Pity not honoured age for his white beard;

He is an usurer: strike me the counterfeit matron,
It is her habit only that is honest,
Herself's a bawd: let not the virgin's cheek
Make soft thy trenchant sword; for those milk paps
That through the window bars bore at men's eyes
Are not within the leaf of pity writ,
But set them down horrible traitors: spare not the babe,
Whose dimpled smile from fools exhaust their mercy;
Think it a bastard, whom the oracle
Hath doubtfully pronounced thy throat shall cut,
And mince it sans remorse: swear against objects;
Put armour on thine ears and on thine eyes;
Whose proofs, nor yells of mothers, maids, nor babes,
Nor sight of priests in holy vestments bleeding,
Shall pierce a jot. There's gold to pay thy soldiers:
Make large confusion: and, thy fury spent,
Confounded be thyself" (Act iv. sc. 3).

The women, seeing his wealth, immediately beg him for gold, and he answers, "Hold up, you sluts, your aprons mountant." They are not to swear, for their oaths are worthless, but they are to go on deceiving, and being "whores still," they are to seduce him to attempts to convert them, and to deck their own thin hair with the hair of corpses, that of hanged women preferably; they are to paint and rouge until they themselves lie dead: "Paint till a horse may mire upon your face."

They shout to him for more gold; they will "do anything for gold." Timon answers them in words which Shakespeare, for all the pathos of his youth, has never surpassed, words whose frenzied scathing has never been equalled:

"Consumptions sow
In hollow bones of men: strike their sharp shins,
And mar men's spurring; crack the lawyer's voice,
That he may never more false title plead,
Nor sound his quillets shrilly: hoar the flamen,
That scolds against the quality of flesh,
And not believes himself: down with the nose,
Down with it flat: take the bridge quite away
Of him that, his particular to foresee,
Smells from the general weal: make curled-pate ruffians bald,
And let the unscarred ruffians of the war
Derive some pain from you: plague all;

That your activity may defeat and quell
The source of all erection. There's more gold:
Do you damn others, and let this damn you,
And ditches grave you all.

Phrynia and Timandra. More counsel with more gold, bounteous Timon."

The passion in this is overpowering. One need only compare it with Lucian to realise the fire that Shakespeare has put into the old Greek, whose reflections are only savage in substance, being absolutely tame in expression—"The name of misanthrope shall sound sweetest in my ears, and my characteristics shall be peevishness, harshness, rudeness, hostility towards men," &c. Compare this scene with the latter part of Plutarch's *Alcibiades*, to which we know Shakespeare had referred, and see what the poet's acrimony has made of Timandra, the faithful mistress who follows Alcibiades to Phrygia. They are together when his murderess sets fire to the house, and it is Timandra who enshrouds his body in the most costly material she possesses, and gives him as splendid a funeral as her isolated position can secure.

Apemantus follows close upon Alcibiades, and after he is driven away, two bandits appear, attracted by the report of the treasure. Timon welcomes them, crying, "Rascal thieves, here's gold." He adds good advice to the money. They are to drink wine until it drives them mad, so they may, perchance, escape hanging; they are to put no trust in physicians, whose antidotes are poisons; when they can, they are to kill as well as steal. Theft is universal, the law itself being only made to conceal robbery:

"Rob one another. There's more gold. Cut throats.
All that you meet are thieves: to Athens go;
Break open shops; *nothing can you steal*
But thieves do lose it."

The worthy Proudhon himself has not set forth more plainly his axiom, "Property is theft."

When the Senate appeals to Timon for his assistance as general and statesman, he first professes sympathy, then cries:

"If Alcibiades kill my countrymen,
Let Alcibiades know this of Timon,
That Timon cares not."

He may sack Athens, pull old men by the beard, and give the sacred virgins over to the mercies of the soldiery. Timon cares as little as the soldier's knife recks of the throats it cuts. The most worthless blade in Alcibiades' camp is more valued by him than any life in Athens. All feeling for country, home, even for the helpless, has utterly perished.

Shakespeare borrows a final touch from Plutarch, which, in his hand, becomes a masterpiece of bloodthirsty irony. He declares he does not, as they suppose, rejoice in the general desolation; his countrymen shall once more enjoy his hospitality. A fig-tree grows by his cave, which it is his intention to cut down; but before it is felled, any friend of his, high or low, who wishes to escape the horrors of a siege, is welcome to come and hang himself. He next announces that his grave is prepared, and they that seek him may come thither and find an oracle in his tombstone, then:

> "Lips, let sour words go by and language end:
> What is amiss, plague and infection mend!
> Graves only be man's works and death their gain!
> Sun, hide thy beams! Timon hath done his reign."

These are his last words. May pestilence rage amongst men! May it infect and destroy so long as there is a man left to dig a grave! May the world be annihilated as Timon is about to annihilate himself. The light of the sun will presently be extinguished for him; let it be extinguished for all!

This is not Othello's sorrow over the power of evil to wreck the happiness of noble hearts, nor King Lear's wail over the ever-threatening possibilities and the heaped-up miseries of life: it is an angry bitterness, caused by ingratitude, which has grown so great that it darkens the sky of life and causes the thunder to roll with such threatening peals as we have never heard even in Shakespeare. All that he has lived through in these last years, and all that he has suffered from the baseness of other men, is concentrated in this colossal figure of the desperate man-hater, whose wild rhetoric is like a dark essence of blood and gall drawn off to relieve suffering.

XIV

CONVALESCENCE—TRANSFORMATION—THE NEW TYPE

THE last, wildest words of this bitter outbreak had been spoken. The dark cloud had burst and the skies were slowly clearing.

It seems as though the blackest of his griefs had been lightened in the utterance, and now that the steady *crescendo* had burst into its most furious *forte*, he breathed more freely again. He had said his say; Timon had called for the extinction of humanity by plague, sexual disease, slaughter, and suicide. The powers of cursing could go no farther.

Shakespeare has shouted himself hoarse and his fury is spent. The fever is over and convalescence has set in. The darkened sun shines out once more, and the gloomy sky shines blue again.

How and why! Who shall say?

In all the obscurity of Shakespeare's life-history, nowhere do we feel our ignorance of his personal experiences more acutely than here. Some have sought an explanation in the resignation which comes with advancing years, and of which we certainly catch glimpses in his latest works. But Shakespeare neither was, nor felt himself, old at forty-five; and the word resignation is meaningless in connection with this marvellous softening of his long exasperated mood. It is more than a mere reconciliation; it is a revival of that free and lambent imagination which has lain so long in what seemed to be its death-swoon. There is no play of fancy in resignation.

Once more he finds life worth living, the earth beautiful, enchantingly, fantastically attractive, and those who dwell upon it worthy of his love.

In the purely external circumstances no change has occurred. The political outlook in England is the same, and it is not likely that he would be greatly stirred by events such as the assassina-

tion of Henry IV. of France in 1610 and the consequent expulsion of the Jesuits from Great Britain. Details—like the decree forbidding English Catholics (Recusants) from coming within ten miles of the Court, and James's removal of his mother's bones and their pompous re-interment in Westminster Abbey—could have little effect upon Shakespeare.

What has personally befallen him that has had such power to re-attune his spirit and lead it back from discord to the old melody and harmony? Surely we are now brought face to face with one of the decisive crises of his life.

Let us anticipate the works yet to be written—*Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*.

In this last splendid period of his life's glowing September, his dramatic activity, bearing about it the clear transparent atmosphere of early autumn, is more richly varied now than it has ever been.

What figures occupy the most prominent place in the poet's sumptuous harvest-home but the young, womanly forms of Marina, Imogen, Perdita, and Miranda. These girlish and forsaken creatures are lost and found again, suffer grievous wrongs, and are in no case cherished as they deserve; but their charm, purity, and nobility of nature triumph over everything.

They must have had their prototypes or type.

A new world has opened out to Shakespeare, but it would be profitless to spend much time on more or less probable conjectures concerning how and by whom it was revealed. We will, therefore, only lightly touch upon the possibility that Shakespeare, after and during the violent crisis of his loathing for humanity, was gradually reconciled to life by some young and womanly nobility of soul, and by all the poetry which surrounds it and follows in its train.

All these youthful women are akin, and are sharply separated from the heroines of his former plays. They are half-real, half-imaginary. The charm of youth and fantastic romance shines round them like a halo; the foulness of life has no power to defile them. They are self-reliant without being endowed with the buoyant spirit of his earlier adventurous maidens, and they are gentle without being overshadowed by the pathetic mournfulness of his sacrificial victims. Not one comes to a tragic end, and not one ever utters a jest, but all are holy in the poet's eyes.

The situations of Marina and Perdita are very similar; both are castaways, apparently fatherless and motherless, left solitary amidst dangerous or pitiable circumstances. Imogen is suspected and her life threatened, like Marina's, and although she is suspected and sentenced to death by her nearest and dearest, her strength never falters, and even her love for her unworthy husband is unimpaired.

Miranda is deprived of her rank and condemned to the solitude of a desert island, but is sheltered even there by a father's watchful care. There is indeed a half-fatherly tenderness in the delineation of Miranda, and the conception of the native charm of a young girl as a wonderful mystery of nature. Neither Molière's Agnes nor Shakespeare's Miranda have ever looked upon the face of a young man before they meet the one they love, but Agnes possesses only the artificially-preserved ignorance and innocence which disappear like dew before the sun of love. To Shakespeare, Miranda appears like a being from another world, an ideal of pure spiritual womanhood and maidenly passion, before which he almost kneels in worship.

Let us glance back at Shakespeare's gallery of women.

There are the viragoes of his youth, bloodthirsty women like Tamora, guilty and powerful ones like Margaret of Anjou, and later, Lady Macbeth, Goneril, and Regan; there are feeble women like Anne in Richard III., and shrews like Katharine and Adriana, in whom we seem to detect a reminiscence of the wife at Stratford.

Then we have the passionately loving, like Julia in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Venus, Titania, Helena in *All's Well that Ends Well*, and, above all, Juliet. There are the charmingly witty and often frolicsome young girls, like Rosaline in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Portia in the *Merchant of Venice*, Beatrice, Viola, and Rosalind.

Then the simply-minded, deeply-feeling, silent natures, with an element of tragedy about them, pre-ordained to destruction—Ophelia, Desdemona, Cordelia. After these come the merely sensual types of his bitter mood—Cleopatra and Cressida.

And now, lastly, the young girl, drawn with the ripened man's rapture over her youth, and a certain passion of admiration.[1]

[1] In Mrs. Jameson's charming old book, *Shakespeare's Female Characters*, she has grouped his women in an arbitrary manner. Disregarding all chronological sequence, she divides twenty-three characters into four groups:—1. Characters of

She had been lost to him, as Marina to her father Pericles, and Perdita to her father Leontes. He feels for her the same fatherly tenderness which his last incarnation, the magician Prospero, feels for his daughter Miranda.

He had taken a greater burden of life upon himself in the past than he well could bear, and he now lays its heaviest portion aside. No more tragedies! No more historical dramas! No more of the horrors of realism! In their stead a fantastic reflection of life, with all the changes and chances of fairy-tale and legend! A framework of fanciful poetry woven around the charming seriousness of the youthful woman and the serious charm of the young girl.

It works like a vision from another world, an enchantment set in surroundings as dream-like as itself. A ship in the open sea off Mitylene; a strange, delightful, ocean-encircled Bohemia; a lonely, magically-protected island; a Britain, where kings of the Roman period and Italians of the sixteenth century meet young princes who dwell in woodland caves and have never seen the face of woman.

Thus he gradually returns to those brighter moods of his youth from which the fairy dances of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* had evolved, or that unknown Forest of Arden in which cypresses grew and lions prowled, and happy youth and mirthful maidenhood carelessly roamed. Only the spirit of frolic has departed, while free play is given to a fancy unhampered by the laws of reality, and much earnest discernment lies behind the untrammelled sport of imagination. He waves the magician's wand and reality vanishes, now, as formerly. But the light heart has grown sorrowful, and its mirth is no more than a faint smile. He offers the daydreams of a lonely spirit now, rich but evanescent visions, occupying in all a period of from four to five years.

Then Prospero buries his magic wand a fathom deep in the earth for ever.

Intellect. 2. Characters of Passion and Imagination. 3. Characters of the Affections. 4. Historical characters. Heine characterises forty-five feminine figures in his *Shakespeare's Mädchen und Frauen*, but the last twenty-one are only distinguished by a few quotations, and he makes no attempt at any deeper interpretation, historical or psychological.

XV

PERICLES—COLLABORATION WITH WILKINS AND ROWLEY—SHAKESPEARE AND CORNEILLE

SEVENFOLD darkness surrounds Shakespeare's productions in that transition period during which morbid distrust was giving way to the brighter view of life we find in his later plays. We possess a brief series of plays: *Timon of Athens* and *Pericles*, which are plainly only partially his work, and *Henry VIII.* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, of which we may confidently assert that Shakespeare had nothing to do with them beyond the insertion of single important speeches and the addition of a few valuable touches.

He had not adapted other men's work since his novitiate, neither had he blended his own intellectual produce with alien and inferior efforts. What is the reason of such an association suddenly and repeatedly occurring now? I will state my view of the matter without any circumlocution or criticism of the opinion of others. We noticed in *Coriolanus* that Shakespeare's changed attitude towards humanity had also affected his attitude towards his art. A certain carelessness of execution had made itself felt. His steadily increasing despair of finding any virtue or worth in the world, and the ever-growing resentment against the coarseness and thanklessness of men, were accompanied by his corresponding indifference and negligence as a dramatist.

We have followed Shakespeare through his early struggles and youthful happiness to the great and serious epoch of his life, and through the anything but brief period of gloom to its crisis in the wild outburst of *Timon of Athens;* after which we recognised the first symptoms of convalescence. A perspective of not too profoundly serious nor realistic dramas has opened out before us, whose freely playing fantasy proves that Shakespeare is once more reconciled to life.

It stands to reason that this reconciliation was not effected by any sudden change, and Shakespeare would not immediately return to the old striving after perfection in his profession—did not do so, in fact, until that very last work in which he laid aside his art for ever. We saw that he had strained too much at life, and he now realises that he has done the same with art. Either he no longer taxes his strength to the uttermost when he writes, or he has lost that power for which no task was too heavy, no horror too terrible to depict. From this moment we feel a foreboding that this mighty genius will lay down his pen some years before his life is to end, and we realise that his mind is being gradually withdrawn from the theatre. He has already ceased to act; soon he will have ceased to write for the stage. He longs for rest, for solitude, away from the town, far into the country; away from his life's battlefield to the quietude of his birthplace, there to pass his remaining years and die.

He may have reasoned thus: For whom should he write? Where were they for whom he had written the plays of his youth? They were dead or far away; he had lost sight of them and they of him—how long does any warm sympathy with a productive intellect usually last? With his ever-increasing indifference to fame, he shrank more and more from the exertion entailed by laborious planning and careful execution, and as little did he care whether the work he did was known by his or another man's name. In his utter contempt for what the crowd did or did not believe about him, he allowed piratical booksellers to publish one worthless play after another with his immortal name upon the title-page—*Sir John Oldcastle* in 1600, *The London Prodigal* in 1605, *A Yorkshire Tragedy* in 1608, *Lord Cromwell* in 1613—and he either obscured or permitted others to obscure his work by associating it with the feeble or affected productions of younger and inferior men. We saw in *Timon*, as we shall presently see in *Pericles* and other plays, how the lines drawn by his master-hand have been blurred by others, traced by clumsy and unsteady fingers. It is not always easy to distinguish whether it was Shakespeare who began the play and wearied of his work half-way through, as Michael Angelo so frequently did, carelessly looking on at its completion by another hand, or whether he had the attempts of others lying before him and hid his own poetical strength and greatness in these fungus growths of childish versi-

fication and unhealthy prose, leaving it to chance whether the future generations, to whom he never gave much thought, would be able to distinguish his part in them. It may be that he treated his work for the theatre much as a modern author does when he makes over his ideas to a collaborator, or writes anonymously in a newspaper or periodical. He believes that among his friends are three or four who will recognise his style, and if they do not (as frequently happens) it is no great matter.

On the title-page of the first quarto edition of *Pericles*, in 1609, are these words: "The late, and much admired play called Pericles, Prince of Tyre. . . . By William Shakespeare." "The late" —the play cannot have been acted before 1608, for there is no contemporary mention of it before that date, whereas from 1609 onwards it is frequently noticed. "The much admired play"—everything witnesses to the truth of these words.[1]

Many contemporary references testify to the favour the play enjoyed. In an anonymous poem, *Pimlyco, or Runne Redcap* (1609), Pericles is mentioned as the new play which gentle and simple crowd to see:

> "Amazde I stood, to see a Crowd
> Of civill Throats stretched out so lowd
> (As at a New Play). All the Roomes
> Did swarm with Gentiles mix'd with Groomes,
> So that I truly thought all These
> Came to see *Shore* or *Pericles*."

The previously mentioned prologue (vol. ii. p. 235) to Robert Tailor's *The Hog has Lost his Pearl* (1614) cannot wish the play anything better than that it may succeed as well as *Pericles*:

> "And if it prove so happy as to please,
> Weele say 'tis fortunate like *Pericles*."

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[1] The complete title runs thus:—"The late, and much admired Play, called Pericles, Prince of Tyre, with the true Relation of the whole History, adventures, and fortunes of the said Prince: As also, The no lesse strange and worthy accidents, in the Birth and Life of his Daughter MARIANA. As it hath been diuers and sundry times acted by his Maiesties Seruants, at the Globe on the Bancside. By William Shakespeare. Imprinted at London for Henry Gosson, and are to be sold at the Signe of the Sunne in Paternoster Row. 1609."

In 1629, Ben Jonson, exasperated by the utter failure of his play *The New Inn*, affords evidence, in the ode addressed to himself which accompanies the drama, of the persistent popularity of *Pericles:*

> "No doubt some mouldy tale
> Like Pericles, and stale
> As the shrieves crusts and nasty as his fish—
> Scraps out of every dish
> Thrown forth and raked into the common tub,
> May keep up the Play-club."

In Sheppard's poem, *The Times displayed in Six Sestyads.* Shakespeare is said to equal Sophocles and surpass Aristophanes, and all for *Pericles'* sake:

> "With Sophocles we may
> Compare great Shakespeare: Aristophanes
> Never like him his Fancy could display,
> Witness the *Prince of Tyre, his Pericles.*"

This play was not included in the First Folio edition, probably because the editors could not come to an agreement with the original publisher; for these pirates were protected by law as soon as the book was entered at Stationers' Hall. During Shakespeare's lifetime and after his death it was one of the most popular of English dramas.

Pericles was formerly considered one of Shakespeare's earliest works, an opinion held strangely enough by Karl Elze in our own day. But all English critics now believe, what Hallam was the first to discover, that the language of such parts of it as were written by Shakespeare belongs in style to his latest period, and it is unanimously declared to have been written somewhere about the year 1608, after *Antony and Cleopatra* and before *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest.* (See, for example, P. Z. Round's introduction to the Irving edition, or Furnival's *Triar Table of the order of Shakespeare's Plays*, reprinted in Dowden and elsewhere.) My own opinion of course is, that *Pericles* follows naturally upon *Coriolanus* and *Timon of Athens*, and forms an appropriate overture to the succeeding fantastically idyllic plays. The reader will have noticed that, unlike Dowden and Furnivall, I have not been able to assign so early a date for the whole series of pessimistic dramas

as 1608 would imply.[1] I assume that certain portions of *Pericles* were forming in Shakespeare's mind even in the midst of the venom to which he was giving vent for the last time in *Timon of Athens*. In such periods of violent upheaval there may be an undercurrent to the surface-current in the mind of a poet as well as in another man's, and it is this undercurrent which will presently gain strength and become the prevalent mood.

The intelligent reader will have realised that all this dating of Shakespeare's pessimistic works can only be approximate. I am inclined to advance them a year, because I fancy I can trace a connection between *Coriolanus* and Shakespeare's own thoughts of his mother, who died in 1608. But a son does not only think of his mother at the moment she is taken from him, and the fear of losing her in the illness which probably preceded her death may have recalled his mother's image to Shakespeare's mind with special force long before he actually lost her. Here, s in all cases where it is not expressly mentioned, the reader is requested to see an underlying Perhaps or Possibly, and to add one where he feels the need of it. Only the main lines of the sequence are at all certain. Where external criterions are missing, the internal alone cannot determine the question of a year or a month. As far as *Pericles* is concerned, we do possess some guide, for it is most unlikely that Shakespeare's share in the play would be added after it was performed in 1608, especially in the face of the assurance on the title-page.

The work as it has come down to us is not in reality a drama at all, but an incompletely dramatised epic poem. We are taken back to the childhood of dramatic art. The prologue to each act and the various explanatory passages interpolated throughout the play are supposed to be spoken by the old English poet John Gower, who had treated the subject in narrative verse about the year 1390. He introduces the play to the audience and explains it, as it were, with his pointer. Anything that cannot well be acted he narrates, or has represented in dumb-show. He speaks

[1] The Triar Table determines their order thus :—

Troilus and Cressida	1606–7
Antony and Cleopatra	1606–7
Coriolanus	1607–8
Timon of Athens	1607–8

in the old octosyllabic rhymed iambics, which, as a rule, however, do not rhyme:

> "To sing a song that old was *sung*
> From ashes ancient Gower has *come*,
> Assuming man's *infirmities*,
> To glad your ears and please your *eyes*."

And in the last lines of the prologue to the fourth act:

> "Dionyza doth *appear*,
> With Leonine a *murderer*."

He jestingly alludes to the fact that the play includes nearly the whole of Pericles' life, from youth to old age. Marina is born at the beginning of the third act, and is about to be married at the close of the fifth. Nothing could well be farther from that unity of time and place which was attempted in France at a later period. The first act is laid at Antioch, Tyre, and Tarsus; the second in Pentapolis, on the sea-shore, in a corridor of Simonides' palace, and lastly in a hall of state. The third act opens on board ship and continues in the house of Cerimon at Ephesus. The fourth act begins with an open place near the sea-shore and ends in a brothel at Mitylene; the fifth, on Pericles' ship off Mitylene, ending in the Temple of Diana at Ephesus. There is as little unity of action as of time and place about the play; its disconnected details are merely held together by the individuality of the principal characters, and there is neither rhyme nor reason in its various incidents; pure chance seems to rule all. The reader will seek in vain for any intention—I do not mean moral, but any fundamental idea in the play. Gower certainly institutes a contrast between an immoral princess at the beginning of the play and a virtuous one at the close, but this moral contrast has no connection with the intermediate acts.

Pericles was an old and very popular subject. Its earliest form was probably that of a Greek romance of the fifth century, of which a Latin translation is still extant. It was translated into various languages during the Middle Ages, and one version has found its way into the *Gesta Romanorum*. In the twelfth century it was incorporated by Godfrey of Viterbo in his great *Chronicle*. John Gower, who adapts it in the eighth book of his *Confessio*

Amantis, gives Godfrey as his authority. The Latin tale was translated into English by Lawrence Twine in 1576, under the title of *The Patterne of Paynfull Aduentures*, a second edition of which was published in 1607. In all but the English adaptations the hero's name is given as Apollonius of Tyre. There can be no doubt that Shakespeare's play was based upon the 1607 edition, and this in itself is sufficient to refute the antiquated notion that his part in it belonged to his youthful period. It was on the substance of this play, and doubtless also upon Shakespeare's share in it, that George Wilkins founded the romance he published in 1608 under the title of *The Painfull Aduentures of Pericles Prince of Tyre, Being the true history of the Play of Pericles as it was lately presented by the worthy and ancient John Gower.* The fact that Wilkins, in the dedication of his book, which is a mere abstract of Twine and the play, calls it "a poor infant of my braine," and the still more remarkable similarity of the style and metrical structure of the first act of *Pericles* with Wilkins' own play, *The Miseries of enforced Marriage*, would seem to point to him as the author of the extraneous portions of *Pericles.* In both dramas a quantity of disconnected material has been brought together in a long-drawn-out play, destitute of dramatic situations or interest, and in both we find the same jarring and awkward inversions of words. The incidents of the *Enforced Marriage* recall some of the non-Shakespearian elements of *Timon;* here, also, we are shown a spendthrift, evidently in possession of the sympathies of his author, by whom he is considered a victim. The mingling of prose, blank verse, and clumsily-introduced couplets with the same rhymes constantly recurring, reminds us of those acts and scenes in which Shakespeare had no part. Fleay observes that 195 rhymed lines occur in the two first acts of *Pericles*, and only fourteen in the last three, so marked is the contrast of style between the two parts, and he notices that this frequency of rhyme corresponds closely to the method of George Wilkins' own work. Both he and Boyle agree with Delius, who was the first to express the opinion, that Wilkins is the author of the first two acts. By dint of comparisons of style, Fleay came to the conclusion that Gower's two speeches in five-footed iambics, before and after Scenes 5 and 6 (which differ so markedly in form and language from his other monologues), were written by

William Rowley, who had been associated in the previous year with Wilkins and Day in the production of a wretched melodrama, *The Travels of Three English Brothers.* His attempt, however, to ascribe to Rowley the two prose scenes which take place in the brothel is made more on moral than æsthetic grounds, and can have very little weight. My own opinion is that they were entirely written by Shakespeare. They are plainly presupposed in certain passages which are unmistakably Shakespearian; they accord with that general view of life from which he is but now beginning to escape, and they markedly recall the corresponding scenes in *Measure for Measure.*

It is impossible to ascertain the precise circumstances under which the play was produced. Some critics have maintained that it originally began with what is now the third act, and that Shakespeare, having lain it aside, gave Wilkins and Rowley permission to complete it for the stage. But in reality the two men wrote the play in collaboration and disposed of it to Shakespeare's company, which in turn submitted it to the poet, who worked upon such parts as appealed to his imagination. As the play now belonged to the theatre, and Wilkins was not at liberty to publish it, he forestalled the booksellers by bringing it out as a story, taking all the credit of invention and execution upon himself.

Never was a drama contrived out of more unlikely material. The name of the knightly Prince of Tyre is changed, probably because it did not suit the metre, from Apollonius to Pericles, which was corrupted from the Pyrocles of Sidney's *Arcadia.* He comes to Antioch to risk his life on the solution of a riddle. According to his success or failure he is to be rewarded by the Princess's hand or death. The riddle betrays to him the abominable fact that the Princess is living in incest with her own father. He withdraws from the contest, and flies from the country to escape the wrath of the wicked prince, who is even more certain to slay him for success than for failure. He returns to Tyre, but feeling insecure even there, he falls into a state of melancholy, and quits his kingdom to escape the pursuit of Antiochus.

Arriving at Tarsus at a time when its inhabitants are suffering from famine, he succours them with corn from his ships. Soon afterwards he is wrecked off Pentapolis and cast ashore. His armour is dragged out of the sea in fishermen's nets, and

Pericles takes part in a knightly tournament. The king's daughter, Thaisa, falls in love with him at first sight, as did Nausicaa with Odysseus. She ignores all the young knights around her for the sake of this noble stranger, who has suffered shipwreck and so many other misfortunes. She will marry him or none; he shines in comparison with the others as a precious stone beside glass. Pericles weds Thaisa, and bears her away with him on his ship. They are overtaken by a storm, during which Thaisa dies in giving birth to a daughter. The superstition of the sailors requires that her corpse shall be immediately thrown into the sea. The coffin drifts ashore at Ephesus, where Thaisa reawakes to life unharmed. The newborn child is left by Pericles to be nursed at Tarsus. As Marina grows up, her foster-mother determines to kill her because she outshines her daughter. Pirates land and prevent the murder; carrying off Marina, they sell her to the mistress of a brothel in Mitylene. She preserves her purity amidst these horrible surroundings, and, finding a protector, gains her release. She is taken on board Pericles' ship that she may charm away his melancholy. A recognition ensues, and, in obedience to a sign from Diana, they sail to Ephesus; the husband is reunited to his wife and the newly-found daughter to her mother.

This is the dramatically impossible canvas which Shakespeare undertook to retouch and finish. That he should have made the first sketch of the play, as Fleay so warmly maintains, seems very improbable upon a careful study of the plot. To write such a beginning to an already finished end would have been an almost impossible task for Wilkins and his collaborator, involving a terribly active vigilance; for the setting of the Shakespearian scenes, Gower's prologues, interludes, and epilogues, &c., is a frame of their own making. Everything favours the theory that it was Shakespeare who undertook to shape a half- or wholly-finished piece of patchwork.

He hardly touched the first two acts, but they contain some traces of his pen—the delicacy with which the incest of the Princess is treated, for example, and Thaisa's timid, almost mute, though suddenly-aroused love for him who at first glance seems to her the chief of men. The scene between the three fishermen, with which the second act opens, owns some turns which speak of Shakespeare, especially where a fisherman says that the avari-

cious rich are the whales "o' the land, who never leave gaping till they've swallowed the whole parish, church, steeple, bells, and all," and another replies, "But, master, if I had been the sexton, I would have been that day in the belfry."

"*Second Fisherman.* Why, man?

"*Third Fisherman.* Because he should have swallowed me too: and when I had been in his belly, I would have kept such a jangling of the bells, that he should never have left till he cast bells, steeple, church, and parish up again."

It is not impossible, however, that these gleams of Shakespearian wit are mere imitations of his manner. But, on the other hand, the obvious mimicry of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* in Gower's prologue to the third act is commonplace and clumsy enough:

"Now sleep yslaked hath the rout;
No din but snores the house about.
. . . . .
The cat, with eyne of burning coal,
Now couches fore the mouse's hole;
And crickets sing at the oven's mouth,
E'er the blither for their drouth."

Compare this with Puck's:

"Now the wasted brands do glow,
Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud," &c.

An awkwardly introduced pantomime interrupts the prologue, which is tediously renewed; then suddenly, like a voice from another world, a rich, full tone breaks in upon the feeble drivel, and we hear Shakespeare's own voice in unmistakable and royal power:

"Thou God of this great vast, rebuke these surges,
Which wash both heaven and hell; and thou, that hast
Upon the winds command, bind them in brass,
Having called them from the deep! Oh, still
Thy deafening, dreadful thunders; gently quench
Thy nimble, sulphurous flashes!—Oh, how, Lychorida,
How does my queen?—Thou stormest venomously:
Wilt thou spit all thyself? The seaman's whistle
Is as a whisper in the ears of death,
Unheard." . . .

The nurse brings the tiny new-born babe, saying:

> "Here is a thing too young for such a place,
> Who, if it had conceit, would die, as I
> Am like to do: take in your arms this piece
> Of your dead queen.
> *Pericles.* How, how Lychorida!
> *Lychorida.* Patience, good sir; do not assist the storm.
> Here's all that is left living of your queen,
> A little daughter: for the sake of it,
> Be manly and take comfort."

The sailors enter, and, after a brief, masterly conversation, full of the raging storm and the struggle to save the ship, they superstitiously demand that the queen, who has but this instant drawn her last breath, should be thrown overboard. The king is compelled to yield, and turning a last look upon her, says:

> "A terrible childbed hast thou had, my dear;
> No light, no fire: the unfriendly elements
> Forgot thee utterly; nor have I time
> To give thee hallowed to thy grave, but straight
> Must cast thee, scarcely coffined, in the ooze;
> Where, for a monument upon thy bones,
> And e'er-remaining lamps, the belching whale
> And humming water must o'erwhelm thy corse,
> Lying with simple shells."

He gives orders to change the course of the ship and make for Tarsus, because "the babe cannot hold out to Tyrus." There is so mighty a breath of storm and raging seas, such rolling of thunder and flashing of lightning in these scenes, that nothing in English poetry, not excepting Shakespeare's *Tempest* itself, nor Byron's and Shelley's descriptions of Nature, can surpass it. The storm blows and howls, hisses and screams, till the sound of the boatswain's whistle is lost in the raging of the elements. These scenes are famous and beloved among that seafaring folk for whom they were written, and who know the subject-matter so well.

The effect is tremendously heightened by the struggles of human passion amidst the fury of the elements. The tender and strong grief expressed in Pericles' subdued lament for Thaisa is

not drowned by the storm; it sounds a clear, spiritual note of contrast with the raging of the sea. And how touching is Pericles' greeting to his new-born child:

> "Now, mild may be thy life!
> For a more blustrous birth had never babe:
> Quiet and gentle thy conditions, for
> Thou art the rudeliest welcomed to this world
> That ever was prince's child. Happy what follows!
> Thou hast as chiding a nativity
> As fire, air, water, earth, and heaven can make,
> To herald thee from the womb." . . .

Although Wilkins' tale follows the course of the play very faithfully, there are but two points in which the resemblance between them extends to a similarity of wording. The first of these occurs in the second act, which was Wilkins' own work, and the second here. In his tale Wilkins says:

> "Poor inch of nature! Thou art as rudely welcome to the world as ever princess' babe was, and hast as chiding a nativity as fire, air, earth, and water can afford thee."

Even more striking than the identity of words is the exclamation "Poor inch of nature!" It is so entirely Shakespearian that we are tempted to believe it must have been accidentally omitted in the manuscripts from which the first edition was printed.

It is not until the birth of Marina in the third act that Shakespeare really takes the play in hand. Why? Because it is only now that it begins to have any interest for him. It is the development of this character, this tender image of youthful charm and noble purity, which attracts him to the task.

How Shakespearian is the scene in which Marina is found strewing flowers on the grave of her dead nurse just before Dionyza sends her away to be murdered; it foreshadows two scenes in plays which are shortly to follow—the two brothers laying flowers on the supposed corpse of Fidelio in *Cymbeline*, and Perdita, disguised as a shepherdess, distributing all kinds of blossoms to the two strangers and her guests in *The Winter's Tale*.

Marina says (Act iv. sc. 1):

> "No, I will rob Tellus of her weed
> To strew thy green with flowers: the yellows, blues,
> The purple violets, and marigolds,
> Shall as a carpet hang upon thy grave
> While summer-days do last.—Ay me! poor maid,
> Born in a tempest, when my mother died,
> This world to me is like a lasting storm,
> Whirring me from my friends."

The words are simple, and not especially remarkable in themselves, but they are of the greatest importance as symptoms. They are the first mild tones escaping from an instrument which has long yielded only harsh and jarring sounds. There is nothing like them in the dramas of Shakespeare's despairing mood.

When, weary and sad, he consented to re-write parts of this *Pericles*, it was that he might embody the feeling by which he is now possessed. Pericles is a romantic Ulysses, a far-travelled, sorely tried, much-enduring man, who has, little by little, lost all that was dear to him. When first we meet him, he is threatened with death because he has correctly solved a horrible riddle of life. How symbolic this! and he is thus made cautious and introspective, restless and depressed. There is a touch of melancholy about him from the first, accompanied by an indifference to danger; later, when his distrust of men has been aroused, this characteristic despondency becomes intensified, and gives an appearance of depth of thought and feeling. His sensitive nature, brave enough in the midst of storm and shipwreck, sinks deeper and deeper into a depression which becomes almost melancholia. Feeling solitary and forsaken, he allows no one to approach him, pays no heed when he is spoken to, but sits, silent and stern, brooding over his griefs (Act iv. sc. 1). Then Marina comes into his life. When she is first brought on board, she tries to attract his attention by her sweet, modest play and song; then she speaks to him, but is rebuffed, even angrily repulsed, until the gentle narrative of the circumstances of her birth and the misfortunes which have pursued her arrests the king's attention. The restoration of his daughter produces a sudden change from anguished melancholy to subdued happiness.

So, as a poet, had Shakespeare of late withdrawn from the

world, and in just such a manner he looked upon men and their sympathy until the appearance of Marina and her sisters in his poetry.

It is probable that Shakespeare wrote the part of Pericles for Burbage, but there is much of himself in it. The two men had more in common than one would be apt to suppose from the only too well-known story of their rivalry on a certain intimate occasion. It is just such trivial anecdotes as this that make their way and are remembered.

Shakespeare has spiritualised Pericles; Marina, in his hands, is a glorified being, who is scarcely grown up before her charm and rare qualities rouse envy and hatred. We first see her strewing flowers on a grave, and immediately after this we listen to her attempt to disarm the man who has undertaken to murder her. She proves herself as innocent as the Queen Dagmar of the ancient ballad. She "never spake bad word nor did ill turn to any living creature." She never killed a mouse or hurt a fly; once she trod upon a worm against her will and wept for it. No human creature could be cast in gentler mould, and truth and nobility unite with this mildness to shed, as it were, a halo round her.

When, after rebuffing and rejecting her, Pericles has gradually softened towards Marina, he asks her where she was born and who provided the rich raiment she is wearing. She replies that if she were to tell the story of her life none would believe her, and she prefers to remain silent. Pericles urges her:

> "Prithee, speak:
> Falseness cannot come from thee; for thou look'st
> Modest as Justice, and thou seem'st a palace
> For the crowned Truth to dwell in; I will believe thee.
> . . . . . .
> Tell thy story;
> If thine considered prove the thousandth part
> Of my endurance, thou art a man, and I
> Have suffered like a girl: yet thou dost look
> Like Patience gazing on kings' graves, and smiling
> Extremity out of act."

All this rich imagery brings Marina before us with the nobility of character which is so fitly expressed in her outward

seeming. It is Pericles himself who feels like a buried prince, and it is he who has need of her patient sympathy, that the violence of his grief may be softened by her smile. It is all very dramatically effective. The old Greek tragedies frequently relied on these scenes of recovery and recognition, and they never failed to produce their effect. The dialogue here is softly subdued, it is no painting in strong burning colours that we are shown, but a delicately blended pastel. In order to gain an insight into Shakespeare's humour at the time *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* were written, the reader was asked to think of a day on which he felt especially well and strong and sensible that all his bodily organs were in a healthy condition,—one of those days in which there is a festive feeling in the sunshine, a gentle caress in the air.

To enter into his mood in a similar manner now you would need to recall some day of convalescence, when health is just returning after a long and severe illness. You are still so weak that you shrink from any exertion, and, though no longer ill, you are as yet far from being well; your walk is unsteady, and the grasp of your hand is weak. But the senses are keener than usual, and in little much is seen; one gleam of sunshine in the room has more power to cheer and enliven than a whole landscape bathed in sunshine at another time. The twitter of a bird in the garden, just a few chirps, has more meaning than a whole chorus of nightingales by moonlight at other moments. A single pink in a glass gives as much pleasure as a whole conservatory of exotic plants. You are grateful for a trifle, touched by friendliness, and easily moved to admiration. He who has but just returned to life has an appreciative spirit.

As Shakespeare, with the greater susceptibility of genius, was more keenly alive to the joyousness of youth, so more intensely than others he felt the quiet, half-sad pleasures of convalescence.

Wishing to accentuate the sublime innocence of Marina's nature, he submits it to the grimmest test, and gives it the blackest foil one could well imagine. The gently nurtured girl is sold by pirates to a brothel, and the delineation of the inmates of the house, and Marina's bearing towards them and their customers, occupies the greater part of the fourth act.

As we have already said, we can see no reason why Fleay should reject these scenes as non-Shakespearian. When this

critic (whose reputation has suffered by his arbitrariness and inconsistency) does not venture to ascribe them to Wilkins, and yet will not admit them to be Shakespeare's, he is in reality pandering to the narrow-mindedness of the clergyman, who insists that any art which is to be recognised shall only be allowed to overstep the bounds of propriety in a humorously jocose manner. These scenes, so bluntly true to nature in the vile picture they set before us, are limned in just that Caravaggio colouring which distinguished Shakespeare's work during the period which is now about to close. Marina's utterances, the best he has put into her mouth, are animated by a sublimity which recalls Jesus' answers to his persecutors. Finally, the whole *personnel* is exactly that of *Measure for Measure*, whose genuineness no one has ever disputed. There is also an occasional resemblance of situation. Isabella, in her robes of spotless purity, offers precisely the same contrast to the world of pimps and panders who riot through the play that Marina does here to the woman of the brothel and her servants.

After all that he had suffered, it was hardly possible Shakespeare would relapse into the romantic, mediæval worship of woman as woman. But his natural rectitude of spirit soon led him to make exceptions from the general condemnation which he was inclined for a time to pass upon the sex; and now that his soul's health was returning to him, he felt drawn, after having dwelt solely upon women of the merely sensual type, to place a halo round the head of the young girl, and so he brings her with unspotted innocence out of the most terrible situations.

When she sees that she is locked into the house, she says:

> "Alack, that Leonine was so slack, so slow!
> He should have struck, not spoke; or that these pirates,
> Not enough barbarous, had but o'erboard thrown me
> For to seek my mother!
>
> *Bawd.* Why lament you, pretty one?
>
> *Marina.* That I am pretty.
>
> *Bawd.* Come, the gods have done their part in you.
>
> *Marina.* I accuse them not.
>
> *Bawd.* You are 'light into my hands, where you are like to live.
>
> *Marina.* The more my fault
> To 'scape his hands where I was like to die.
> . . . Are you a woman?

Bawd. What would you have me be, an I be not a woman?
Marina. An honest woman, or not a woman."

The governor Lysimachus seeks the house, and is left alone with Marina. He begins:

"Now, pretty one, how long have you been at this trade?
Marina. What trade, sir?
Lysimachus. Why, I cannot name't but I shall offend.
Marina. I cannot be offended with my trade. Please you to name it.
Lysimachus. How long have you been of this profession?
Marina. E'er since I can remember.
Lysimachus. Did you go to't so young? Were you a gamester at five or at seven?
Marina. Earlier too, sir, if now I be one.
Lysimachus. Why, the house you dwell in proclaims you to be a creature of sale.
Marina. Do you know this house to be a place of such resort, and will come into't? I hear say you are of honourable parts, and are the governor of this place.
Lysimachus. Why, hath your principal made known unto you who I am?
Marina. Who is my principal?
Lysimachus. Why, your herb-woman; she that sets seeds and roots of shame and iniquity. Oh, you have heard something of my power, and so stand aloof for more serious wooing. . . . Come, bring me to some private place: come, come.
Marina. If you were born to honour, show it now;
If put upon you, make the judgment good
That thought you worthy of it."

Lysimachus is arrested by her words and his purpose changed. He gives her gold, bids her persevere in the ways of purity, and prays the gods will strengthen her. She succeeds in obtaining her freedom and in supporting herself by her talents. The lasting impression she had made on the governor in her degradation is proved by his sending for her to charm King Pericles' melancholy, and later he aspires to her hand.

The scenes quoted do not give an intellectual equivalent for all that has been dared in order to produce them, but they bear witness to the desire Shakespeare felt of painting youthful womanly purity shining whitely in a very snake-pit of vice, and

the spirit in which it is accomplished is that of both Shakespeare and the Renaissance.

At a somewhat earlier period such a subject would have assumed, in England, the form of a *Morality*, an allegorical religious play, in which the steadfastness of the virtuous woman would have triumphed over *Vice*. At a somewhat later period, in France, it would have been a Christian drama, in which heathen wickedness and incredulity were put to confusion by the youthful believer. Shakespeare carries it back to the days of Diana; his virtue and vice are alike heathen, owning no connection with church or creed.

Thirty-seven years later, during the minority of Louis XIV., Pierre Corneille made use of a very similar subject in his but little-known tragedy, *Théodore, Vierge et Martyre*. The scene is laid in the same place in which *Pericles* begins, in Antioch during the reign of Diocletian.

Marcella, the wicked wife of the governor of the province, determines that her daughter Flavia shall marry the object of her passion, Placidus. He, however, has no thought but for the Princess Theodora, a descendant of the old Syrian kings. Theodora is a Christian, and these are the times of Christian persecution. In order to revenge herself upon the young girl and estrange Placidus from her, Marcella causes her to be confined in just such another house as that into which Marina was sold.

The dramatic interest would naturally lie in the development of Theodora's feelings when she finds herself abandoned to her fate. But the chaste young girl will not, and cannot, express in words the horror she must feel; and in any case the laws of propriety would not allow her to do so on the French stage. Corneille avoided the difficulty by exchanging action for narrative. Various false or incomplete accounts of what has taken place keep the audience in anxious expectation.

Placidus is told that Theodora's sentence has been commuted to one of simple banishment. He breathes again. Then he hears that Theodora has actually been taken to the house; that Didymus, her Christian admirer, bribed the soldiers to allow him to enter first, and that shortly afterwards he returned, covering his face with his cloak as though ashamed. He is furious. The third announcement informs him that it

was Theodora who came out disguised in Didymus's clothes. Placidus' rage now gives way to agonising jealousy. He believes that Theodora has yielded willingly to Didymus, and he suffers tortures. Finally we learn the truth. Didymus himself tells how he rescued Theodora unharmed; he is a Christian, and expects to die. "Live thou without jealousy," he says to Placidus; "I can endure the death penalty." "Alas!" answers Placidus, "how can I be other than jealous, knowing that this glorious creature owes more than life to thee. Thou hast given thy life to save her honour; how can I but envy thy happiness!" Both Theodora and Didymus are martyred, and the pagan lover, who did nothing to help his love, is left alone with his shame.

The sole contrast intended here is between the noble qualities developed by the Christian faith and that baseness which was considered inseparable from heathendom.

Two things arrest our attention in this comparison: firstly, the superiority of the English drama, which openly represents all things on the stage, even such subjects as are only passingly alluded to by society; and, secondly, the marked difference in the spirit of that Old England of the Renaissance from the all-pervading Christianism of the early classic period in "most Christian" France.

The calm dignity of Marina's innocence has none of that taint of the confessional which was plainly obnoxious to Shakespeare, and which neither the mediæval plays before him, nor Corneille and Calderon after, could escape. Corneille's Theodora is a saint by profession and a martyr from choice. She gives herself up to her enemies at the end of the play, because she has been assured by supernatural revelation that she will not again be imprisoned in the house from which she has just escaped. Shakespeare's Marina, the tenderly and carefully outlined sketch of the type which is presently to wholly possess his imagination, is purely human in her innate nobility of nature.

It is deeply interesting to trace in this sombre yet fantastically romantic play of *Pericles* the germs of all his succeeding works.

Marina and her mother, long lost and late recovered by a sorrowing king, are the preliminary studies for Perdita and Hermione in *A Winter's Tale.* Perdita, as her name tells us, is lost and is living, ignorant of her parentage, in a strange

country. Marina's flower-strewing suggests Perdita's distribution of blossoms, accompanied by words which reveal a profound understanding of flower-nature, and Hermione is recovered by Leontes as is Thaisa by Pericles.

The wicked stepmother in *Cymbeline* corresponds to the wicked foster-mother in *Pericles*. She hates Imogen as Dionyza hates Marina. Pisanio is supposed to have murdered her as Leonine is believed to have slain Marina, and Cymbeline recovers both sons and daughter as Pericles his wife and child.

The tendency to substitute some easy process of explanation, such as melodramatic music or supernatural revelation, in the place of severe dramatic technique, which appears at this time, betrays a certain weariness of the demands of the art. Diana appears to the slumbering Pericles as Jupiter does to Posthumus in *Cymbeline*.

But it is for *The Tempest* that *Pericles* more especially prepares us. The attitude of the melancholy prince towards his daughter seems to foreshadow that of the noble Prospero towards his child Miranda. Prospero is also living in exile from his home. But it is Cerimon who approaches more nearly in character to Prospero. Note his great speech:

> "I held it ever,
> Virtue and cunning were endowments greater
> Than nobleness and riches: careless heirs
> May the two latter darken and expend;
> But immortality attends the former,
> Making a man a god. 'Tis known I ever
> Have studied physic, through which secret art,
> By turning o'er authorities, I have,
> Together with my practice, made familiar
> To me and to my aid the blest infusions
> That dwell in vegetives, in metals, stones;
> And I can speak of the disturbances
> That Nature works, and of her cures; which doth give me
> A more content in course of true delight
> Than to be thirsty after tottering honour
> Or tie my treasure up in silken bags,
> To please the fool and death" (Act iii. sc. 2).

The position in which Thaisa and Pericles stand in the second act towards the angry father, who has in reality no serious

objection to their union, closely resembles that of Ferdinand and Miranda before the feigned wrath of Prospero. Most notable of all is the preliminary sketch we find in *Pericles* of the tempest which ushers in the play of that name. Over and above the resemblance between the storm scenes, we have Marina's description of the hurricane during which she was born (*Pericles*, Act iv. sc. 1), and Ariel's description of the shipwreck (*Tempest*, Act i. sc. 2).

Many other slight touches prove a relationship between the two plays. In *The Tempest* (Act ii. sc. 1), as in *Pericles* (Act v. sc. 1), we have soothing slumbrous music and mention of harpies (*Tempest*, Act iii. sc. 3, and *Pericles*, Act iv. sc. 3). The words "virgin knot," so charmingly used by Marina:

> "If fires be hot, knives sharp, or waters deep,
> Untied I still my virgin knot will keep" (Act iv. sc. 2),

are also employed by Prospero in reference to Miranda in *The Tempest* (Act iv. sc. 1); and it will be observed that these are the only two instances in which they occur in Shakespeare.

Thus the germs of all his latest works lie in this unjustly neglected and despised play, which has suffered under a double disadvantage: it is not entirely Shakespeare's work, and in such portions of it as are his own there exist, in the dark shadow cast by her hideous surroundings about Marina, traces of that gloomy mood from which he was but just emerging. But for all that, whether we look upon it as a contribution to Shakespeare's biography or as a poem, this beautiful and remarkable fragment, *Pericles*, is a work of the greatest interest.[1]

[1] Delius: *Ueber Shakespeare's Pericles, Prince of Tyre. Jahrbuch der deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft*, iii. 175–205; F. G. Fleay: *On the Play of Pericles. The New Shakspere Society's Transactions*, 1874, 195–254; Swinburne: *A Study of Shakespeare*, p. 206; Gervinus: *Shakespeare*, vol. i. 187, and Elze: *Shakespeare*, p. 409, still believe *Pericles* to be a work of Shakespeare's youth.

XVI

FRANCIS BEAUMONT AND JOHN FLETCHER

It was a comparatively easy task to distinguish Shakespeare's part in *Timon of Athens* and *Pericles*, for it consisted of all that was important in either play. The identity of the men who collaborated with him seems to have been decided by pure chance, and is of little interest to us now-a-days. It is a different matter, however, in the case of two other dramas of this period which have been associated with Shakespeare's name—*The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Henry VIII.*—for his part in them is unimportant, in one almost imperceptible, in fact. Their real author was a young man just coming into notice, who afterwards became one of the most famous dramatists of the day, and can hardly have been indifferent to Shakespeare. The question, therefore, of their mutual relations and the origin of their collaboration is one of the greatest interest.

A drama entitled *Philaster* had been played at the Globe Theatre in 1608 with extraordinary success. It was the joint work of two young men, Francis Beaumont, aged 22, and John Fletcher, aged 28. The play made their reputation, and they found themselves famous from the moment of its representation. A would-be amusing, but in reality rather dull play of Fletcher's, *The Woman-Hater*, had been put on the stage in 1606–7. It contained some good comic parts, but nothing that gave promise of the poet's later works.

After this triumph with *Philaster*, the two friends produced in 1610 or 1611 their masterpiece, *The Maid's Tragedy*, and their scarcely less admired *A King and no King*. This joint activity continued until the death of Beaumont in 1615. During the remaining ten years of his life Fletcher wrote alone, with the single exception of a play produced in collaboration with Rowley, and attained to a fame which probably eclipsed Shakespeare's in these

last years of his life, as it certainly did immediately after his death. Dryden remarks, in his well-known *Essay of Dramatic Poetry* (1668), "Their plays are now the most pleasant and frequent entertainments of the stage, two of them being acted through the year for one of Shakespeare's or Jonson's." This statement seems somewhat exaggerated if we compare it with the entries in Pepys' Diary; still, we know that Shakespeare's fame was completely eclipsed towards the end of the century by that of Ben Jonson. Samuel Butler not only prefers the latter, but speaks as though his superiority was universally admitted.[1]

The two new poets were neither learned proletaires, like Peele, Greene, and Marlowe, nor of the middle classes, like Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, but were both of good family. Fletcher's father was a high-placed ecclesiastic, much experienced in the courts of Elizabeth and James, and Beaumont was the son of a Justice of Common Pleas, and related to families of some standing. One great source of their popularity lay in the fact that they were thus enabled to reproduce to perfection the manners of the fine gentleman, his general dissipation, and his quick repartee.

Francis Beaumont was born somewhere about the year 1586, at Grace Dieu in Leicestershire. His family numbered among those of the legal aristocracy, and many of its members were noted for poetical propensities and abilities; there were no fewer than three poets by name of Beaumont living at the time of Francis' death. The future dramatist was entered at ten years of age as a gentleman-commoner at Broadgate Hall, Oxford. He early left the university for London, where he was made a member of the Inner Temple. His legal studies appear to have sat lightly upon him, and he seems to have devoted himself principally to the composition of those plays and masques which were so frequently performed by the various legal colleges of those days. In 1613 he wrote the masque which was performed by the legal institutions of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn in honour of the Princess Elizabeth's marriage with the Elector-Palatine.

It seems to have been a mutual enthusiasm for Jonson's *Volpone* (1605) which brought Beaumont and Fletcher together, and united them in a brotherly friendship and fellowship in work of which history affords few parallels. Aubrey, to whom we are indebted for a number of anecdotes about Shakespeare, gives the following

[1] See Richard Garnett: *The Age of Dryden*, p. 249.

vivid picture of their life: "They lived together on the Bankside, not far from the playhouse; both batchelors lay together, had one wench in the house between them, which they did so admire; the same cloathes and cloake, etc., between them."

The two friends soon set to work, and appear to have planned out the dramas together, each finally working out the scenes most suited to his talents. An anecdote related by Winstanley seems to indicate such a method. One day while they were thus apportioning their parts in a tavern they frequented, a man standing at the door overheard the exclamation, "I will undertake to kill the king;" suspecting some treasonable conspiracy, he gave information, with the result that both poets were arrested. In support of the veracity of this anecdote, George Darley observes that a similar incident occurs in Fletcher's *Woman-Hater* (Act v. sc. 2). Great bitterness is certainly expressed in this play on the subject of informers; witness the very unflattering sketch of their ways and manners in the third scene of the second act.

In whatsoever fashion *The Two Noble Kinsmen* may have originally been written, the joint-authors must have finally revised it in company and obliterated to the best of their ability the distinguishing marks of their very different styles. Otherwise it would not offer, now that we are in possession of works executed by each separately, the present difficulty of apportioning to each the honour due to him.

There was no lack of difference, especially of a metrical nature, about their styles. As far as we can judge, Beaumont's was the gift for tragedy; he had less wit and less skill than Fletcher, but he was more genuinely inspired, richer in feeling, and more daring in invention than his brother poet. His noble head is encircled by a halo of sadness, for, like Marlowe and Shelley, two of England's greatest poets, he died before he had completed his thirtieth year.

Beaumont was a devoted admirer of Ben Jonson, and a constant frequenter of that "Mermaid Tavern" whose literary and social gatherings have been celebrated in his poetical epistle to the object of his admiration. His passionate regard for the author of *Volpone* is shown in a poem addressed to him upon the subject, in which he exalts Jonson's art and the charm of his comedy above all that any other poet (thereby including Shakespeare) had ever produced for the English stage. Jonson replies

with his ode "To Mr. Francis Beaumont," in which he reciprocates the admiring attention by a declaration of the warmest affection, and expresses himself "not worth the least indulgent thought thy pen drops forth," assuring his friend that he envies him his greater talent. According to Dryden, Jonson submitted everything he wrote to Beaumont's criticism as long as the young man was alive, and even gave him his manuscripts to correct.

While Beaumont's name is thus associated with Jonson, Fletcher's forms a constellation in conjunction with that of Shakespeare.

John Fletcher was born in December 1579, at Rye in Sussex, and was therefore fifteen years younger than the great poet with whom he is said to have collaborated more than once. His father, the Dean of Peterborough, was successively promoted through the bishoprics of Bristol and Worcester to that of London. He was a handsome, eloquent man, with a luxurious temperament, inclined to display and pleasure of all kinds. Every inch a courtier, all his thoughts were concentrated upon gaining, retaining, or recovering the royal favour.

One episode of his life of an impressively dramatic and historic interest, calculated to make the strongest impression on the imagination of an embryo tragic poet, must have been often related by him to his young son. Dr. Richard Fletcher was the divine appointed by Government to attend on Mary Stuart at the time of her execution, and was therefore both spectator and participator in the closing scene of the Scottish Cleopatra's life.

When he approached the Queen in the great hall hung with black, and invited her, as he was in duty bound to do, to unite with him in prayer, she turned her back upon him.

"Madam," he began with a low obeisance, "the Queen's most excellent majesty. Madam, the Queen's most excellent majesty." Thrice he commenced his sentence, wanting words to pursue it. When he repeated the words a fourth time she cut him short.

"Mr. Dean," she said, "I am a Catholic, and must die a Catholic. It is useless to attempt to move me, and your prayers will avail me little."

"Change your opinion, madam," he cried, his tongue being loosed at last. "Repent of your sins, settle your faith in Christ, by Him to be saved."

"Trouble not yourself further, Mr. Dean," she answered. "I am settled in my own faith, for which I mean to shed my blood."

"I am sorry, madam," said Shrewsbury, "to see you so addicted to Popery!"[1]

Slowly and carefully her ladies removed her veil so as not to disturb the arrangement of her hair. They took off her long black robe, and she stood then in a skirt of scarlet velvet; they removed the black bodice, and revealed one of scarlet silk. Sobbing, they drew on her scarlet sleeves and placed scarlet slippers upon her feet. It was like a transformation scene in a theatre when the proud woman stood suddenly dressed in scarlet in the black funeral hall. When her women wept and wailed she said to them, "*Ne criez pas vous, j'ai promis pour vous. Adieu, au revoir*, and praying in a loud voice, *In te Domine confido*, she laid her head upon the block. It was impossible that Richard Fletcher should ever forget the inflexible resolution and indomitable courage displayed by the great actress, nor was he likely to forget the terrible mingling of horror with pure burlesque in the final scene. In his agitation, the executioner missed his aim, and a weak blow fell upon the handkerchief with which the Queen's eyes were bound, inflicting a slight wound upon her cheek. The second blow left the severed head hanging by a piece of skin, which the executioner cut as he drew back the axe. Then Dr. Fletcher witnessed a second transformation, as marvellous as any ever produced by a magician's wand: the great mass of thick false hair fell from the head. The Queen who had knelt before the block possessed all the ripened charm and dignified beauty of maturity; the head held up by the executioner to the gaze of the little company was that of a grey, wrinkled, old woman.[2] Could anything in the world have given young Fletcher a keener insight into the horrors of tragic catastrophe, the solemnity of death, and the blending of the terrible with the utterly grotesque which life's most supreme moments occasionally produce? It must have acted like a call and incitement to the creation of tragic and burlesque theatrical effect.

John Fletcher was educated at Cambridge, and probably came to London shortly before Beaumont, to try his fortune as a dra-

[1] Froude: *History of England*, vol. xii. p. 254.
[2] J. St. Loe Strachey: *Beaumont and Fletcher*, vol. i. p. xv.

matic writer. His first success was with *Philaster, or Love lies Bleeding*, in 1608. Shakespeare must have witnessed its triumphant performance with strangely mingled feelings, for it could but strike him as being in many ways an echo of his own work. In so far as he is wrongfully deprived of his throne, Prince Philaster occupies much the same position as Hamlet, and several of his speeches to the king are markedly in the style of the Danish Prince of Shakespeare's play. Thus, in the opening scene of the first act:

> "*King.* Sure he's possess'd.
> *Philaster.* Yes, with my father's spirit: It's true, O king!
> A dangerous spirit. Now he tells me, king,
> I was a king's heir, bids me be a king;
> And whispers to me, these are all my subjects.
> 'Tis strange he will not let me sleep, but dives
> Into my fancy, and there gives me shapes that kneel
> And do me service, cry me 'King.'
> But I'll oppose him, he's a factious spirit,
> And will undo me. Noble sir, your hand,
> I am your servant.
> *King.* Away, I do not like this," &c.

The king, however, has nothing to fear from Philaster, for the prince loves and is beloved by the monarch's daughter, Arethusa, whom her father intends to wed to that arrogant braggart, Prince Pharamond of Spain. Philaster, all unknown to himself, is beloved by Euphrasia, the daughter of the courtier Cleon. Disguised as a page she enters the prince's service under the name of Bellario, and displays a devotion which no trial can shake, not even that of carrying love-letters between Philaster and Arethusa, nor of being transferred to the service of the latter that she may be at hand in case of need. Euphrasia's situation and feelings resemble those of Viola in *Twelfth Night*, but the comedy of Shakespeare's play here becomes serious and romantic tragedy. *Philaster* must have reminded Shakespeare yet more forcibly of another of his plays, and one to which the second half of the title, *i.e.*, *Love lies Bleeding*, would have been applicable, for in the course of the piece Philaster and Arethusa are brought into a situation which is a counterpart of that of Othello and Desdemona.

It happens in the following manner. The princess treats Pharamond with as much coldness as she dares, allowing her

betrothed none of the privileges which he may claim after marriage. Pharamond, who naïvely confides to the audience that his temperament will not stand such treatment, is sympathised with by an exceedingly accommodating court lady. Her name is Megra; she is one of those wanton fair ones whom Fletcher excelled in portraying, and is closely akin to the Chloe of his charming play *The Faithful Shepherd.* The time and place of this assignation being betrayed, the king, enraged at the insult offered to his daughter, breaks in upon them and overwhelms Megra with cruel and coarse abuse. She, on her part, threatens that if her name is publicly disgraced, she will reveal all she knows of a much too tender friendship between the princess and a handsome page lately taken into her service.

The king, finding that Bellario is actually attendant upon Arethusa, believes the slander and insists upon his instant dismissal. The courtiers, who, in common with the people, love Philaster and look to him to dethrone the king and rule in his stead, have watched this obstacle of his passion for the princess with no great favour. They hasten to report the rumour to him. Dion, Euphrasia-Bellario's own father, mendaciously asserts that he has surprised the lovers together. No use is made of this incident, nor of any of the opportunities offered by Euphrasia's disguise, which remains a secret even from the audience until the last scene of the play. Philaster in a jealous frenzy draws his sword upon Bellario and drives him away. The page instinctively guesses that Philaster is caught in the meshes of some intrigue, but does not divine its nature. Her parting words might have been addressed by Desdemona to Othello:

> "But through these tears,
> Shed at my hopeless parting, I can see
> A world of treason practised upon you,
> And her, and me."

Just as Desdemona, suspecting nothing, warmly pleads Cassio's cause with Othello, so Arethusa laments to Philaster that she has been forced to dismiss his cherished messenger of love:

> "O cruel!
> Are you hard-hearted too? Who shall now tell you
> How much I loved you? Who shall swear it to you,

And weep the tears I send? Who shall now bring you
Letters, rings, bracelets? lose his health in service?
Wake tedious nights in stories of your praise?" (Act iii. sc. 2).

Philaster suffers the same agonies as the Moor of Venice, but being of a naturally gentle disposition, he only answers her in terms hardly to be surpassed for mournful and pathetic beauty. Later, coming upon the princess and her page, who have met by chance in a wood, he is so carried away by jealousy that he draws his sword first upon Arethusa and then upon Bellario. The page takes the blow without a murmur, and goes willingly to prison in place of Philaster for the attempt upon the princess's life. The devotion of Desdemona is thus reproduced in both these maidens, and finds in both a striking expression. All comes right eventually. A revolution places Philaster upon the throne, the women who love him recover from their wounds, and the discovery of Bellario's sex puts an end to all scandal. Philaster marries his beloved, and she, even more magnanimous than the queen in De Musset's *Carmosine*, closes the play with an invitation to Bellario-Euphrasia to share their life:

"Come, live with me;
Live free as I do. She that loves my lord,
Cursed be the wife that hates her."

In spite of its many echoes from his own plays, Shakespeare cannot have failed to appreciate the talent displayed in this drama. The gentleness and charm of the women in the works of both young poets must have appealed to him, offering as they did so marked a contrast to those of Chapman and Marlowe, neither of whom had any appreciation of womanliness or power to depict it. The best of Chapman's tragedies can have contained little that would attract Shakespeare. *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron, Marshall of France*, was rather a ten-act epic than a drama. His comedies, too, even *Eastward Hoe*, with its wonderful picture of the London of the day to which Ben Jonson and Marston contributed their share, must have repelled him by a realism which he always avoided in his own work. Beaumont and Fletcher laid their scenes in Sicily, or rather in some imaginary country, whose abstract poetry, more in accordance with the Romance nation's manner of representing

men and their passions, cannot have been unsympathetic to Shakespeare, especially at this period of his life.

A King and no King, the play which in all probability immediately succeeded *Philaster*, contains the same merits and defects as the latter, and here also Shakespeare might find reminiscences of his own work. When the king's mother kneels before her son, and is raised by him (Act iii. sc. 1), we are reminded of Volumnia kneeling to Coriolanus, and we feel that the same scene was in the mind of the two young poets. The comic character of the play is one Bessus, a soldier by profession, and an arrant coward in spite of his captaincy. He is a braggart, liar, and, if occasion offers, a pander, being equally diverting in all these capacities. Considerable humour is displayed in the elaboration of his character, but the mighty figure of Falstaff is plainly discernible in the background. The authors even go to the length of appropriating some distinctly Falstaffian expressions. A fencing-master says of Bessus (Act iv. sc. 3):

> "It showed discretion, the better part of valour." [1]

In *Philaster* we were shown a strong passion consumed by groundless jealousy. In *A King and no King* we have a still stronger passion, that of the young Arbaces for Princess Panthea, leading to confusion and disaster. Throughout the whole play Arbaces never doubts for a moment that they are brother and sister. The secret of his birth is not discovered until the last scene, just as Bellario's sex is not made known until the end of *Philaster*. Spaconia discovers that King Tigranes, who is as her very life to her, is in love with Panthea; whereupon she assumes much the same position towards him that Euphrasia did towards her love. But there is profounder study of character in the new play. Arbaces, a mixture of vanity and boastfulness with really excellent qualities, makes an extremely complex personality, though not an unnatural or unsympathetic one, and we are given a study of complicated passion in no way inferior to that in Racine's *Phèdre*, the instinct of love violently and irresistibly aroused, but constantly met by the fear and horror of incest.

[1] It is Falstaff who says in the *First Part of Henry IV.* (Act v. sc. 4), "The better part of valour is discretion." This parallel has been overlooked both in Ingleby's *Shakespeare's Century of Praise* and in Furnivall's *Fresh Allusions to Shakespeare.*

The subject is treated with great pathos and power of language.[1]

In 1609–10 Fletcher reached the zenith of his fame as sole author and as collaborator with Beaumont. That sweet and fresh pastoral play *The Faithful Shepherdess*, Fletcher's unassisted work, must have been written before the spring of 1610, for Sir William Skipworth, to whom, amongst others, it is dedicated, died in the May of that year. The theme was peculiarly suited to the fresh and delicate grace of Fletcher's lyrical gift, and here again Shakespeare may have perceived a distinct imitation of his *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Here also the lovers are metamorphosed, and Perigot embraces Amaryllis in the form of Amoret, believing her to be his love; he also wounds Amoret as Philaster wounds Arethusa. A still earlier version of the play may be found in Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*. Darley has observed that Fletcher imitated several lines from the same source, and among them, oddly enough, some which had been appropriated by Spenser

[1] "Know I have lost
The only difference betwixt man and beast,
My reason.

PANTHEA.

Heaven forbid!

ARBACES.

Nay, it is gone,
And I am left as far without a bound
As the wide ocean that obeys the winds;
Each sudden passion throws me where it lists,
And overwhelms all that oppose my will.
I have beheld thee with a lustful eye;
My heart is set on wickedness, to act
Such sins with thee as I have been afraid
To think of. . . . .
I have lived
To conquer men, and now am overthrown
Only by words, brother and sister. Where
Have those words dwelling? I will find 'em out
And utterly destroy 'em; but they are
Not to be grasped. . . . .
Accursed man!
Thou bought'st thy reason at too dear a rate;
For thou hast all thy actions bounded in
With curious rules, where every beast is free;
What is there that acknowledges a kindred
But wretched man? Who ever saw the bull
Fearfully leave the heifer that he liked
Because they had one dam?"

from Chaucer, whose verses greatly surpass either of the later poets in charm. In *The Faithful Shepherdess*, for example, we have (v. 5):

> "Sort all your shepherds from the lazy clowns
> That feed their heifers in the budded brooms."

In Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* it stands:

> "So loytering live you, little herd grooms,
> Keeping your beasts in the budded brooms."

But in Chaucer's *House of Fame* we find the following verse (iii. 133):

> "And many a floite and litlyng home
> And pipis made of grenè corne
> As have these litel herdè-groomes
> That kepen bestis in the bromes."

Fletcher's principal source, however, was, as the title tells us, Guarini's *Pastor Fido.*

The Faithful Shepherdess is a charming idyl, too airy and delicate to have an immediate success with his own generation, but it may be read with pleasure to this day, and has secured lasting fame to its author. Ben Jonson's later but also admirable pastoral play, *The Sad Shepherd*, is the English poem of that period which most resembles it.

Immediately after the production of this little tragi-comedy, Fletcher offered to the Globe Theatre the most remarkable work which had resulted from the combined labours of himself and Francis Beaumont—*The Maid's Tragedy.*

The first act opens with the preparations for a wedding festivity. The king has commanded the worthy and distinguished Lord Amintor to break off his engagement to the gentle and devoted Aspasia and to marry Evadne, the beautiful sister of his dearest friend and comrade, the great general Melantius. Amintor, to whom the king's command is sacred, and who is, moreover, strongly attracted by Evadne, breaks with Aspasia, dear as she is to him. We witness Aspasia's deep grief, the outburst of rage on the part of her father (the cowardly Calianax), and the performance of the masque on the eve of the wedding, in which some of the poets' sweetest lyrics are to be found.

The second act represents the wedding-night. The disrobing of the bride by her friends, and all the fun and banter attendant on the occasion, form the introduction. Then follows, between bridegroom and bride, the first great scene of the play, as boldly dramatic as any written by Shakespeare before or Webster after this date. Amintor approaches Evadne with tender words, she gently repulses him. He strives to disarm what he supposes to be her bashfulness, but she tells him calmly and coldly that she will never be his. Still he does not understand, and now urges her with impatient desire. Then she rises, like a serpent about to sting, and coldly hisses that she is, and will continue to be, the king's mistress, that the marriage has merely been arranged by him as a screen for his relations with her. The fury and thirst for revenge which seizes Amintor when he realises this outrage gives way to a desperate comprehension that it is the king who has dishonoured him; to a subject the person of the king is inviolable.

The third act opens with an audacious visit from the king on the following morning. With cool patronage he asks Amintor if the night has given him satisfaction. Amintor replies composedly, and answers the king's more particular inquiries quite in the style of the happy husband. It is now the king's turn to be disconcerted. He sends for Evadne and violently accuses her of treachery, against which she, of course, passionately protests. The king, beside himself with rage, sends for Amintor; he is furiously attacked by Evadne for his falsehoods, and the king brutally explains the situation and the part the husband is expected to play. This double scene is written in a masterly fashion, with a strong sense of dramatic effect, but the rest of the act is worthless, being chiefly composed of dialogues between Amintor and Melantius, who learns the truth about his sister from his friend. The two are perpetually drawing upon each other and sheathing their swords again; firstly, because Melantius will not believe in his sister's shame; secondly, because Amintor will not allow Melantius to seek any revenge which will reveal his dishonour. It all reads like a weak imitation of the Spanish dramatists before Calderon.

The fourth act presents another series of effective scenes. The brother accuses the sister of her infamy, and when she coldly denies everything he threatens her with his sword, until she vows

that she will take bloody vengeance on the cruel and vicious king who has brought about her degradation. Then the suddenly converted Evadne falls upon her knees and implores her husband's forgiveness, which he, seeing how bitterly she repents the life she has been living, accords. This is followed by a particularly well-imagined scene, in which the ridiculous old Calianax, who hates Melantius, denounces him to the king for his attempt to persuade him, Calianax, to give up the city he held for the monarch. In spite of its truth, Melantius listens to the accusation quite imperturbably, and succeeds in giving it the appearance of being merely the ramblings of an old dotard.

In the fifth act is a skilfully prepared Judith scene—the second great scene of the play. Evadne goes to the king's chamber, passing through the anteroom, which resounds with the profligate jests of the courtiers. The authors linger with a certain voluptuous cruelty over the scene between the king, who does not awake from his sleep until his hands have been tied to the bed, and the woman who has been his mistress, and who now tortures him with scathing words before she murders him. The remaining scenes are marred by their excessive sensationalism. Aspasia, disguised as her brother, seeks Amintor, from whom she can no longer be separated. He receives her with warm cordiality, but she taunts, strikes, and even kicks him, wishing to attain, if possible, the happiness of dying by his hand. He finally loses patience and draws his sword upon her, seeing too late that it is his beloved whom he has slain. Evadne now appears, red-handed and glowing with love, but Amintor repulses her with horror, she is stained with that greatest of all crimes, regicide. She kills herself in despair, and Amintor also dies by his own hand.

Aspasia is the perpetually slighted young woman who appears, always resigned and gentle, in all Beaumont and Fletcher's plays. The old coward Calianax is another of their standing characters. The brotherhood between Melantius and Amintor possesses, in spite of its occasional artificiality, some interest for us, as does the corresponding friendship in the *Two Noble Kinsmen*, from the fact that the mutual relations between the authors evidently served as the prototype in both cases. Evadne's character, if not completely intelligible, is entirely *hors ligne*, and most admirably suited to dramatic treatment. The play indeed is a model of everything which dramatic and theatrical treatment requires, and

was well calculated to impress an audience for whom Shakespeare's art was too refined.

We cannot, therefore, be surprised that the friend and fellow-craftsman of the two poets, who was the first to publish a collected edition of their works after their death, should write the following words without fear of contradiction: "But to mention them is to throw a cloud upon all former names and benight posterity; this book being, without flattery, the greatest monument of the scene that time and humanity have produced, and must live, not only the crown and sole reputation of our own, but the stain of all other nations and languages" (Shirley's address to the reader).

XVII

SHAKESPEARE AND FLETCHER—THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN AND HENRY VIII.

In the year 1684 a drama was published for the first time under the following title:

"*The Two Noble Kinsmen;* presented at the Blackfriars, by the King's Maiesties Servants, with great applause. Written by the memorable Worthies of their time { Mr. *John Fletcher* and / Mr. *William Shakespeare* } Gent: Printed at *London* by *Tho. Cotes* for *John Waterson*, and are to be sold at the signe of the *Crown* in Paul's Churchyard."

This play was not included in the First Folio edition of Beaumont and Fletcher (1647), but it appeared in the second (1679). Even supposing the editors of the First Folio edition of Shakespeare's works to have entertained no doubt of his share in it, it would probably remain in Fletcher's possession until his death in 1625, and would therefore be inaccessible to them.

The play is of no particular value; it is far inferior to Fletcher's best work, and not to be compared with any of Shakespeare's completed dramas. Nevertheless, many eminent critics of this century have found distinct traces in this play of the styles of both greater and lesser poet.

Like that of *Troilus and Cressida*, the theme found its way from the pages of an old-world poet, Statius' *Thebaide* in this case, into those of Boccaccio, and through him it came to Chaucer. Under the form given it by the latter it proved the foundation of several dramas of the reigns of Elizabeth and James.[1] Most of the essential details of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* may be found in Boccaccio's *La Teseide.*

[1] A careful study of the plot may be found in Theodor Bierfreund's book: *Palamon og Arcite*, 1891.

It is a tale of two devoted friends, both suddenly seized by a romantic passion for a woman whom they have watched walking in a garden from the window of the tower in which they are held prisoners of war. Their friendship is shattered, each claiming the exclusive right to the affections of this lady, who is the Duke's sister Emilia. One of the friends is set at liberty upon the express condition of his quitting the country for ever. His irresistible longing for the fair one, however, draws him back to live disguised in her neighbourhood. The second friend escapes from prison, and meeting the first, engages him in a duel, which is interrupted by Duke Theseus. They explain their position to him, and their passion for his sister. The Duke arranges a formal tournament between the suitors; Emilia's hand is to reward the victor, and the vanquished is to suffer death. The conqueror, however, is fatally injured by a fall from his horse, and it is the defeated man who marries the princess.

There can be no reasonable question of the traces of Fletcher's hand in this play, for in it we find not only his easily recognised metrical style, but many features peculiar to his poorer work—the lax composition which permits of two plots running side by side with no connection between them, a tendency to merely theatrical effect and entirely motiveless action, contrived to surprise the audience at the cost of psychology, and finally his conception of virtue and vice in the relations between man and woman. To Fletcher, chastity meant entire abstinence, and side by side with this "chastity" he places, and delineates with relish, an immodest and purely sensual passion. Thus Emilia talks of her "chastity," and the jailer's daughter alludes to her passion for Palamon in terms which are repulsively shameless. When Shakespeare's women love, they are neither chaste in this fashion nor passionate in this fashion. They are sympathetically and reverentially drawn as loving only one man and loving him faithfully, whereas the affections of Fletcher's heroines veer round as suddenly as we saw Evadne's veer in *The Maid's Tragedy*. Therefore it is possible for him to portray such women as Emilia, who during the tournament loves first one and then the other of her suitors as his chances of victory are in the ascendant. That it contains many reminiscences of Shakespeare is no argument against Fletcher's responsibility for the greater part of the play, but quite the contrary; we have already seen

how many of these traces are to be found even among his best works. In the *Two Noble Kinsmen* we find echoes from *The Midsummer Night's Dream*, from *Julius Cæsar* (the quarrel between Brutus and Cassio), and, above all, a tasteless and offensive imitation of Ophelia's madness, when the jailer's daughter goes crazy for fear while seeking Palamon in the wood at night, and in her raving and singing later in the play. Shakespeare never repeated without excelling, and certainly never parodied himself in this fashion.[1]

Shakespeare evidently had no part in the planning of the play. There is no originality in it, and if we do obtain a glimpse of some sort of life's philosophy, it is certainly not his. Swinburne's surmise that the play was sketched by Shakespeare and completed by Fletcher, can therefore hardly be correct. Among other arguments, we may mention that the part in which, according to Swinburne's own opinion, Shakespeare's hand is most traceable, is the conclusion, which is hardly likely to have been written first.

Can any part of the play be ascribed to Shakespeare? Gardiner and Delius believe not, and the Danish critics a few years ago shared the same scarcely justifiable opinion. Bierfreund is uninfluenced by the fact that many of the most eminent English critics hold a contrary view, but such a circumstance should impose the very closest study of the play on the part of foreign critics. In my case this has led me to the conclusion that although the drama was planned and the greater part executed by Fletcher, he had Shakespeare's assistance in finishing the work. We can hardly imagine that Shakespeare vouchsafed his help from any motive but that of interest in, and a friendly feeling for, the younger poet, who had submitted his work to him and appealed for his assistance.

It would but weary the reader to go through the work from beginning to end to show how the seal of Shakespeare's style is stamped upon it. The traces of his pen are most frequent in the opening act; the appeal of the first queen to Theseus ("We are three queens," &c.), in the introductory scene, for example. These lines possess all the rhythm peculiar to the productions of the last years of the poet's life; and how boldly figurative and genuinely

[1] A similar opinion is skilfully maintained by Bierfreund, but I cannot agree with his main contention that Shakespeare had no part in this play whatever.

Shakespearian in expression is the same queen's fanciful expression:

> "Dowagers, take hands;
> Let us be widows to our woes; delay
> Commends us to a famishing hope."

Theseus' last speech in this act (the summing up of the situation and circumstances) reminds us of Hamlet's monologue, "The whips and scorns of life, the oppressors' wrongs," &c., and Ulysses' beauty, wit, high birth," &c.

> "Since I have known frights, fury, friends' behests,
> Love's provocations, zeal, a mistress' task,
> Desire of liberty, a fever, madness." . . .

Mere imitations must not be confounded with Shakespeare's own style, however. The passage in which Emilia speaks of the ardent and tender friendship that united her to her dead friend Flavina, which in England has been mistakenly admired as Shakespeare's work, is in reality a poor copy of the passage in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Act iii. sc. 2) where Helena describes the love between herself and Hermia. The unhealthy affection here set forth bears Fletcher's stamp upon it, and is made particularly unpleasant by the use Emilia makes of the word "innocent."

We are again sensible of Shakespeare's touch in the monologue spoken by the jailer's daughter, which constitutes the second scene of the third act. Note the picturesque expression, "In me has grief slain fear," and many others. From the moment she goes out of her mind down to the last word she utters, Shakespeare has neither part nor lot in those speeches whose uncouth imitation of his style must have been singularly offensive to him.

The greater part of the first scene of the fifth act is undoubtedly Shakespeare's. Theseus' first speech is superb, and Arcite's address to the knights and invocation of Mars is delightful. The lines at the close of the play have also a Shakespearian ring about them, especially the words so much admired by Swinburne:

> "That nought could buy
> Dear love but loss of dear love."

But there is no deeper, no intellectual interest for us in all this.

Shakespeare had nothing to do with the psychology, or rather want of it, in this play.[1]

Had he any greater share in *Henry VIII.?* The play was first published in the Folio edition of 1623, where it closes the series of Historical Plays. The first four acts are founded on Holinshed's Chronicle, and the last upon Fox's *Acts and Monuments of the Church*, commonly known as the *Book of Martyrs.* The authors were also directly or indirectly indebted to a book which at that date only existed in manuscript, George Cavendish's *Relics of Cardinal Wolsey*, which had been largely drawn upon by Holinshed and Hall. The earliest reference to a play of Henry VIII. may be found in the Stationers' Hall Registry for the 12th of February 1604–5, where the "Enterlude for K. Henry VIII." is entered; but this refers to Rowley's worthless and fanatically Protestant play "*When you see mee you know mee.*" The next mention of such a drama occurs in the well-known oft-quoted letters concerning the burning of the Globe Theatre on the 29th of June 1613. In an epistle from Thomas Larkin to Sir Thomas Pickering, dated "This last of June 1613," we read: "No longer since than yesterday, while Burbege's company were acting at the Globe the play of Henry VIII., and there shooting off certain chambers in way of triumph, the fire catched and there burnt so furiously, as it consumed the whole house, all in less than two hours, the people having enough to do to save themselves." Also Sir Henry Wotton in a letter to his nephews, dated the 6th of July 1613, writes: "Now let matters of state sleep, I will entertain you at the present with what happened at the Bankside. The king's players had a new play, called All is True, representing some principal pieces of the reign of Henry VIII., which was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty, even to the matting of the stage; the knights of the Order, with their Georges and Garter, the guards with their embroidered coats and the like; sufficient, in Truth, within a while to make greatness very familiar if not ridiculous. Now King Henry making a masque at the Cardinal Wolsey's House, and certain canons being shot off at his entrance, some of the paper, or other stuff wherewith one of them was stopped, did light on the thatch, where being thought at first

[1] Compare Hickson, Fleay, and Furnivall upon the subject of *The Two Noble Kinsmen. New Shakspere Society's Transactions*, 1874. R. Boyle maintains that he can trace Massinger's hand in the play.

but an idle smoak, and their eyes more attentive to the show, it kindled inwardly and ran round like a train, consuming within less than an hour the whole House to the very grounds."

The emphatic and thrice repeated assertion of the prologue that all that is about to be represented is *the truth*, taken in conjunction with other details, proves that the play described is our *Henry VIII.*, and at that date, therefore, a new work.

Although never very highly esteemed, it was not until somewhere about the year 1850 that it was ever doubted that *Henry VIII.* was entirely written by Shakespeare. It would now be impossible to find any one holding such an opinion; some of the most competent critics, indeed, maintain that Shakespeare had nothing whatever to do with it.[1]

That keen observer, Emerson, alluding to *Henry VIII.* in his book *Representative Men* draws attention to the two entirely different rhythms of its verse—one that is Shakespearian, and another much inferior. Almost simultaneously, Spedding published an article in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for August 1856 (afterwards reprinted under the title "Who Wrote Shakespeare's Henry VIII?"), in which he points out these differing rhythms, affirming one of them to be Fletcher's. Furnivall and Fleay declared themselves of the same opinion in 1874. To understand this criticism, the reader must bear in mind the following simple evolution of English five-footed iambics. The language does not possess what Scandinavians call feminine rhymes, alternating and contrasting with the masculine. The first attempt to break the monotony of the blank verse simply consisted in the addition of an extra syllable to the original ten—*double ending*. The proportion of these lengthened lines in Shakespeare's *Henry V.* is 18 in 100. Ben Jonson long adhered to the old regular construction, but finally yielded to the newer fashion. Fletcher constantly

[1] In his prefatory treatise to the *Leopold Shakspere* (136 quarto pages), F. J. Furnivall has dealt with this play as being in part Shakespeare's. Now he is of a different opinion, and in a copy of the book presented by him to me, he has written on the margin against *Henry VIII.* "Not Shakspere's." Arthur Symons, who edits and prefaces the play in the Irving edition, told me that he now inclines, on account of its metrical structure, to the belief that Shakespeare had no share in it. P. A. Daniels, the erudite editor of so many Shakespearian quartos, said that he had arrived at no decision respecting its authorship, and characteristically added that the identity was a matter of indifference to him so long as the play was good. This is not the psychological standpoint.

used the eleven-syllabled lines, employing them indeed so regularly and consciously that he is betrayed into a certain monotonous mannerism. Instance the following from *The Wild Goose Chase:*

> "I would I were a woman, sir, to fit you,
> As there be such, no doubt, may engine you too,
> May with a countermine blow up your valour.
> But in good faith, sir, we are both too honest;
> And the plague is, we cannot be persuaded;
> For look you, if we thought it were a glory
> To be the last of all your lovely ladies." . . .

This will also show that Fletcher did not, as a rule, allow the idea to overlap from one line to the next.

In Shakespeare's later works the proportion of eleven-syllabled lines is 33 in 100; in Massinger it is 40, and in Fletcher 50 to 80, or even more. Again, Shakespeare made use, with ever-increasing frequency, of *enjambement* or "run on" lines. This style is particularly noticeable in the passionate dramas of his bitter period, and the growing habit of employing them led to the more and more frequent appearance of lines ending with an adverb, article, or preposition (light and weaking endings). There may be a hundred such in his later plays; there are, for instance, 130 in *Cymbeline.* This feature became an extravagance with his successors. Massinger, whose dramas are considerably shorter than Shakespeare's, has from 150 to 170 of these weak endings in each play.

In comparison with Shakespeare's work there is an effeminate ring about Fletcher's verse, and his was the Corinthian, if Shakespeare's was the Ionic style. Separate and unalloyed, it would be impossible to mistake them, but it is a very different matter when they are blended together in one and the same work as in *Henry VIII.* And here again the problem offered by the *Two Noble Kinsmen* presents itself. Did Shakespeare leave the play unfinished, and was it completed by Fletcher after his death? or did he help Fletcher by writing or re-writing certain scenes of his play? The first supposition is an utter impossibility, as far as I am concerned. The planning of the drama was not Shakespeare's; never in his life did anything so shapeless come from his pen. Is any part of the play due to him? In spite of the verdicts of Furnivall and Symons, I think

so. In the first place, we are not justified in ignoring the testimony borne by Heminge and Condell in the First Folio edition. We have always hitherto taken for granted that they were better qualified to judge of the authenticity of a play than we of the present day; not one of the plays accepted by them has since been rejected by posterity, and we need a very good reason for making an exception of *Henry VIII.* The sole pretext we can offer is the weakness of the whole play, including those portions of which we are in doubt. But this weakness cannot in any way be considered as decisive. Here, working with another man, Shakespeare did not put forth his full strength, exercise all his powers, nor give free play to his imagination. Of this, *Henry VIII.* is not the only example. Moreover, there are strong points of resemblance between those parts of the play which the majority of English critics ascribe to him and works of the same period which were unmistakably his and his alone.

So far back as 1765, Samuel Johnson, who never doubted that the whole play was due to Shakespeare, remarked that the poet's genius seemed to rise and set with Queen Katharine, and that any one might have invented and written the rest. In 1850 James Spedding, moved thereto by some suggestive criticism by Tennyson, came to the conclusion already mentioned, that only certain parts were written by Shakespeare, and that the remainder was due to Fletcher. This opinion was confirmed by Samuel Hickson, who remarked that he had arrived at the same decision three or four years previously, and even with the same results as far as the separate scenes were concerned. This theory was, after a careful examination of the metrical structure, still further corroborated by Fleay.

That the general scheme of the drama was not due to Shakespeare is self-evident. Spedding observed how utterly ineffective the play is as a whole, how the interest collapses instead of increasing, and how the sympathy aroused in the audience is in steady opposition to the actual development of events. The centre of interest in the first act is undeniably Queen Katharine, and, although the deference due to so recent a king as Elizabeth's father forbade too plain speaking, the audience is clearly given to understand that the monarch's passion for Anne Boleyn was really at the bottom of his conscientious scruples concerning the wedlock in which he had lived for twenty

years. Notwithstanding this, the spectators are expected to feel joy and satisfaction when Anne is solemnly crowned queen, and actual triumph when she gives birth to a daughter. In the last act we have the impeachment of Archbishop Cranmer, his acquittal by the king, and his appointment to the godfathership of Elizabeth, all of which has no connection whatever with the real action of the play. Wolsey, one of the two chief characters, the evil principle in opposition to the good Queen Katharine, disappears before her, not even surviving the close of the third act. The whole play, in fact, resolves itself into a succession of spectacular effects, processions, songs, dances, and music. We are shown a great assembly of the State Council in connection with Buckingham's trial; a great festival in Wolsey's palace, with masquerade and dance; the great trial scene, with England's queen at the bar; a great coronation scene, with canopy, crown jewels, and flourish of trumpets; the dying Katharine's vision of dancing angels, with golden vizards and palm branches in their hands; and lastly, the great christening scene in the palace, with another procession of canopy, trumpets, and heralds.

An invisible writing inscribes on every page the words *Written to order.* In all probability it was a hurriedly written piece, hastily put together for performance at the court gaieties in honour of the Princess Elizabeth's marriage. It was for those festivities that Beaumont's little play, *The Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn*, and Shakespeare's own masterpiece, *The Tempest*, were written. Shakespeare's part in *Henry VIII.* is limited to Act i. sc. 1 and 2, Act ii. sc. 3 and sc. 4, Act iii. sc. 2 as far as Wolsey's first monologue, "What should this mean," and Act v. sc. 1 and 4.

This play cannot be classed with Shakespeare's other historical dramas, for, as we have already observed, its events were of too recent occurrence to allow of a strictly veracious treatment. How was it possible to tell the truth about Henry VIII., that coarse and cruel Bluebeard, with his six wives? Did he not inaugurate the Reformation, and was he not the father of Queen Elizabeth? As little could the material interests which furthered the Reformation be represented on the stage, or the various religious and political aspects of the Reformation itself. Fettered and bound as he was by a hundred different considerations, Shakespeare acquitted himself of his difficult task with tact and

skill. When Henry, immediately after his encounter with the beauteous court lady, began, after all those years, to feel scruples on the score of his marriage with his brother's wife, Shakespeare, without making him a hypocrite, allows us to perceive how the new passion acted as a spur to his conscience. The character of Wolsey is founded upon the Chronicle, and the clever parvenu's bold, unscrupulous, yet withal self-controlled nature, is indicated by a few light touches. Fletcher has spoiled the character by the introduction of the badly-written monologues uttered by Wolsey after his fall. We recognise the voice of the clergyman's son in their feeble, pastoral strain. The picture of Anne Boleyn, delicately outlined by Shakespeare, was also put out of drawing later in the play by Fletcher. All the light of the piece, however, is concentrated around the figure of the repudiated Catholic queen, Katharine of Arragon, for in her (as he found her character in the Chronicle) Shakespeare recognised a variant of his present all-absorbing type—the noble and neglected woman. She closely resembles the misjudged Queen Hermione, so unjustly separated from her husband and thrown into prison in the *Winter's Tale.* As in *Cymbeline* Imogen still loves Posthumus although he has cast her off, so Katharine continues to love the man who has wronged her.

Shakespeare has hardly put a word into the mouth of the Queen which may not be found in the Chronicle, but he has created a character of mingled charm and distinction, a union of Castilian pride with extreme simplicity, of inflexible resolution with gentlest resignation, and of a quick temper with a sincere piety, through which the temper sometimes shows. He has drawn with a caressing touch the figure of a queen neither beautiful nor brilliant, but true—true to the core, proud of her birth and queenly rank, but softer than wax in the hands of her royal lord, whom she loves after twenty-four years of married life as dearly as on her wedding-day. Her letters show how devoted and lovable she was, and in them she addresses Henry as "Your Grace, my husband, my Henry," and signs herself "Your humble wife and true servant." In those scenes in which it has fallen to Fletcher's lot to represent the Queen, he has adhered faithfully to Shakespeare's conception of her, which was virtually that of the Chronicle. Even in the hour of her death, Katharine does not forget to rebuke and punish the messenger who has failed in due

respect by omitting to kneel; but she forgives her enemy the Cardinal and sends the King this last greeting:

> "Remember me
> In all humility unto his highness:
> Say his long trouble now is passing
> Out of the world: tell him in death I bless'd him,
> For so I will.—Mine eyes grow dim."

Her stately dignity resembles that of Hermione, but she differs from the latter in her pride of race and piety. Hermione is neither pious nor proud; neither was Shakespeare. We find a little proof of his detestation of sectarianism even in the pompous play of *Henry VIII.* In the third scene of the fifth act the porter exclaims of the inquisitive multitude crowding to watch the christening procession:

> "There are the youths that thunder at the playhouse and fight for bitten apples; that no audience but the Tribulation of Tower Hill or the limbs of Limehouse, their dear brothers, are able to endure."

Limehouse was an artisan house in London; there also the foreigners settled, and it resounded with the strife of religious sects. It is amusing to note how Shakespeare contrived to have a fling at his detested *groundlings* and his Puritan enemies at one and the same time.

As we all know, the drama closes with Cranmer's lengthy and flattering prediction of the greatness of Elizabeth and James, which is marred by the monotony of Fletcher's worst mannerisms. Shakespeare clearly had no share in this tirade, which makes all the more strange the part it has played in the discussions which have been carried on with so little psychology relative to Shakespeare's religious and denominational standpoint. How many times has the prophecy that under Elizabeth "God shall be truly known" been quoted in support of the great poet's firmly Protestant convictions? Yet the line was evidently never written by him, and not a single turn of thought in the whole of this lengthy speech owns any suggestion of his pathos and style. It is only here and there in the play that we obtain a glimpse of Shakespeare, and then he is fettered and hampered by collaboration with another man and by an uncongenial task, to which only a great exertion of his genius could here and there impart any dramatic interest.

XVIII

CYMBELINE—THE THEME—THE POINT OF DEPARTURE—THE MORAL—THE IDYLL—IMOGEN—SHAKESPEARE AND GOETHE—SHAKESPEARE AND CALDERON

In *Cymbeline* Shakespeare is once more sole master of his material, and he works it up into such a many-coloured web as no loom but his can produce. Here, too, we find a certain offhand carelessness of technique. The exposition is perfunctory; the preliminaries of the action are conveyed to us in a scene of pure narrative. The comic passages are, as a rule, weak, the mirth-moving device being for one of the other characters to ridicule or parody in asides the utterances of the coarse and vain Prince Cloten. In the middle of the play (iii. 3), a poorly-written monologue gives us a sort of supplementary exposition, necessary to the understanding of the plot. Finally, the dramatic knot is loosed by means of a *deus ex machinâ*, Jupiter, "upon his eagle back'd," appearing to the sleeping Posthumus, and leaving with him an oracular "label," in which, as though to bear witness to the poet's "small Latin," the deity childishly derives *mulier* from *mollis aer*, or "tender air." But, in spite of all this, Shakespeare is here once more at the height of his poetic greatness; the convalescent has recovered all his strength. He has thrown his whole soul into the creation of his heroine, and has so enchased this Imogen, this pearl among women, that all her excellences show to the best advantage, and the setting is not unworthy of the jewel.

As in Cleopatra and Cressida we had woman determined solely by her sex, so in Imogen we have an embodiment of the highest possible characteristics of womanhood—untainted health of soul, unshaken fortitude, constancy that withstands all trials, inexhaustible forbearance, unclouded intelligence, love that never wavers, and unquenchable radiance of spirit. She, like Marina, is cast into the snake-pit of the world. She is slandered, and not,

like Desdemona, at second or third hand, but by the very man who boasts of her favours and supports his boast with seemingly incontrovertible proofs. Like Cordelia, she is misjudged; but whereas Cordelia is merely driven from her father's presence along with the man of her choice, Imogen is doomed to death by her cruelly-deceived husband, whom alone she adores; and through it all she preserves her love for him unweakened and unchanged.

Strange—very strange! In Imogen we find the fullest, deepest love that Shakespeare has ever placed in a woman's breast, and that although *Cymbeline* follows close upon plays which were filled to the brim with contempt for womankind. He believed, then, in such love, so impassioned, so immovable, so humble—believed in it now? He had, then, observed or encountered such a love—encountered it at this point of his life?

Even a poet has scant enough opportunities of observing love. Love is a rare thing, much rarer than the world pretends, and when it exists, it is apt to be sparing of words. Did he simply fall back on his own experiences, his own inward sensations, his knowledge of his own heart, and, transposing his feelings from the major to the minor key, place them on a woman's lips? Or did he love at this moment, and was he himself thus beloved at the end of the fifth decade of his life? The probability is, doubtless, that he wrote from some quite fresh experience, though it does not follow that the experience was actually his own. It is not often that women love men of his mental habit and stature with such intensity of passion. The rule will always be that a Molière shall find himself cast aside for some Comte de Guiche, a Shakespeare for some Earl of Pembroke. Thus we cannot with any certainty conclude that he himself was the object of the passion which had revived his faith in a woman's power of complete and unconditional absorption in love for one man, and for him alone. In the first place, had the experience been his own, he would scarcely have left London so soon. Yet the probability is that he must just about this time have gained some clear and personal insight into an ideal love. In the public sphere, too, it is not unlikely that Arabella Stuart's undaunted passion for Lord William Seymour, so cruelly punished by King James, may have afforded the model for Imogen's devotion to Leonatus Posthumus in defiance of the will of King Cymbeline.

Cymbeline was first printed in the Folio of 1623. The earliest mention of it occurs in the *Booke of Plaies and Notes thereof* kept by the above-mentioned astrologer and magician, Dr. Simon Forman. He was present, he says, at a performance of *A Winter's Tale* on May 15, 1611, and at the same time he sketches the plot of *Cymbeline*, but unfortunately does not give the date of the performance. In all probability it was quite recent; the play was no doubt written in the course of 1610, while the fate of Arabella Stuart was still fresh in the poet's mind. Forman died in September 1611.

In depth and variety of colouring, in richness of matter, profundity of thought, and heedlessness of conventional canons, *Cymbeline* has few rivals among Shakespeare's plays. Fascinating as it is, however, this tragi-comedy has never been very popular on the stage. The great public, indeed, has neither studied nor understood it.

In none of his works has Shakespeare played greater havoc with chronology. He jumbles up the ages with superb indifference. The period purports to be that of Augustus, yet we are introduced to English, French, and Italian cavaliers, and hear them talk of pistol-shooting and playing bowls and cards. The list of characters ends thus—"Lords, ladies, Roman senators, tribunes, apparitions, a soothsayer, a Dutch gentleman, a Spanish gentleman, musicians, officers, captains, soldiers, messengers, and other attendants." Was there ever such a farrago?

What did Shakespeare mean by this play? is the question that now confronts us. My readers are aware that I never, in the first instance, try to answer this question directly. The fundamental point is, What impelled him to write? how did he arrive at the theme? When that is answered, the rest follows almost as a matter of course.

Where, then, is the starting-point of this seeming tangle? We find it on resolving the material of the play into its component parts.

There are three easily distinguishable elements in the action.

In his great storehouse of English history, Holinshed, Shakespeare found some account of a King Kymbeline or Cimbeline, who is said to have been educated at Rome, and there knighted by the Emperor Augustus, under whom he served in several campaigns. He is stated to have stood so high in the Emperor's

favour that "he was at liberty to pay his tribute or not" as he chose. He reigned thirty-five years, was buried in London, and left two sons, Guiderius and Arviragus. The name Imogen occurs in Holinshed's story of Brutus and Locrine. In the tragedy of *Locrine*, dating from 1595, Imogen is mentioned as the wife of Brutus.

Although Cymbeline, says Holinshed, is declared by most authorities to have lived at unbroken peace with Rome, yet some Roman writers affirm that the Britons having refused to pay tribute when Augustus came to the throne, that Emperor, in the tenth year after the death of Julius Cæsar, "made prouision to passe with an armie ouer into Britaine." He is said, however, to have altered his mind; so that the Roman descent upon Britain under Caius Lucius is an invention of the poet's.

In Boccaccio's *Decameron*, again (Book II. Novel 9), Shakespeare found the story of the faithful Ginevra, of which this is the substance:—At a tavern in Paris, a company of Italian merchants, after supper one evening, fall to discussing their wives. Three of them have but a poor opinion of their ladies' virtue, but one, Bernabo Lomellini of Genoa, maintains that his wife would resist any possible temptation, however long he had been absent from her. A certain Ambrogiuolo lays a heavy wager with him on the point, and betakes himself to Genoa, but finds Bernabo's confidence fully justified. He hits upon the scheme of concealing himself in a chest which is conveyed into the lady's bedroom. In the middle of the night he raises the lid. "He crept quietly forth, and stood in the room, where a candle was burning. By its light, he carefully examined the furnishing of the apartment, the pictures, and other objects of note, and fixed them in his memory. Then he approached the bed, and when he saw that both she and a little child who lay beside her were sleeping soundly, he uncovered her and beheld that her beauty in nowise consisted in her attire. But he could not discover any mark whereby to convince her husband, save one which she had under the left breast; it was a birth-mark around which there grew certain yellow hairs." Then he takes from one of her chests a purse and a night-gown, together with certain rings and belts, and conceals them in his own hiding-place. He hastens back to Paris, summons the merchants together, and boasts of having won the wager. The description of the room makes little impression on Bernabo, who remarks that all this he

may have learnt by bribing a chambermaid; but when the birth-mark is described, he feels as though a dagger had been plunged into his heart. He despatches a servant with a letter to his wife, requesting her to meet him at a country-house some twenty miles from Genoa, and at the same time orders the servant to murder her on the way. The lady receives the letter with great joy, and next morning takes horse to ride with the servant to the country-house. Loathing his task, the man consents to spare her, gives her a suit of male attire, and suffers her to escape, bringing his master false tidings of her death, and producing her clothes in witness of it. Ginevra, dressed as a man, enters the service of a Spanish nobleman, and accompanies him to Alexandria, whither he goes to convey to the Sultan a present of certain rare falcons. The Sultan notices the pretty youth in his train, and makes him (or rather her) his favourite. In the market-place of Acre she chances upon a booth in the Venetian bazaar where Ambrogiuolo has displayed for sale, among other wares, the purse and belt he stole from her. On her inquiring where he got them, he replies that they were given him by his mistress, the Lady Ginevra. She persuades him to come to Alexandria, manages to bring her husband thither also, and makes them both appear before the Sultan. The truth is brought to light and the liar shamed; but he does not escape so easily as Iachimo in the play. He who had falsely boasted of a lady's favour, and thereby brought her to ruin, is, with true mediæval consistency, allotted the punishment he deserves: "Wherefore the Sultan commanded that Ambrogiuolo should be led forth to a high place in the city, and should there be bound to a stake in the full glare of the sunshine, and smeared all over with honey, and should not be set free till his body fell to pieces by its own decay. So that he was not alone stung to death in unspeakable torments by flies, wasps, and hornets, which greatly abound in that country, but also devoured to the last particle of his flesh. His white bones, held together by the sinews alone, stood there unremoved for a long time, a terror and a warning to all."

These two tales—of the wars between Rome and heathen Britain, and of the slander, peril, and rescue of Ginevra—were in themselves totally unconnected. Shakespeare welded them by making Ginevra, whom he calls Imogen, a daughter of King Cymbeline by his first marriage, and therefore next in succession to the crown of Britain.

There remains a third element in the play—the story of Belarius, his banishment, his flight with the king's sons, his solitary life in the forest with the two youths, the coming of Imogen, and so forth. All this is the fruit of Shakespeare's free invention, slightly stimulated, perhaps, by a story in the *Decameron* (Book II. Novel 8). It is in this invented portion, studied in its relation of complement and contrast to the rest, that we shall find an unmistakable index to the moods, sentiments, and ideas under the influence of which he chose this subject and shaped it to his ends.

I conceive the situation in this wise: the mood he has been living through, the mood which has left its freshest impress on his mind, is one in which life in human society seems unendurable, and especially life in a large town and at a court. Never before had he felt so keenly and indignantly what a court really is. Stupidity, coarseness, weakness, and falsehood flourish in courts, and carry all before them. Cymbeline is stupid and weak, Cloten is stupid and coarse, the queen is false.

Here the best men are banished, like Belarius and Posthumus; here the best woman is foully wronged, like Imogen. Here the high-born murderess sits in the seat of the mighty—the queen herself deals in poisons, and demands deadly "compounds" of her physicians. Corruption reaches its height at courts; but in great towns as a whole, wherever multitudes of men are gathered together, it is impossible even for the best to keep himself above reproach. The weapons used against him—lies, slanders, and perfidy—force him to employ whatever means he can in self-defence. Let us then turn our backs on the town, and seek an idyllic existence in the country, in the lonely woodland places.

This note recurs persistently in all the works of Shakespeare's latest period. Timon longed to escape from Athens and make the solitudes echo with his invectives. Here Belarius and the king's two sons live secluded in a romantic wilderness; and we shall presently find Florizel and Perdita surrounded by the autumnal beauty of a rustic festival, and Prospero dwelling with Miranda on a lovely uninhabited island.

When Shakespeare, in early years, had conjured up visions of a fantastic life in sylvan solitudes, it was simply because it amused him to place his Rosalinds and Celias in surroundings worthy of their exquisiteness, ideal Ardennes, or perhaps we should say ideal Forests of Arden like that in which, as a boy, he had learnt

to read the secrets of Nature. In these regions, exempt from the cares of the working-day world, young men and maidens passed their days together in happy idleness, pensive or blithesome, laughing or loving. The forest was simply a republic created by Nature herself for a witty and amorous *élite* of the most brilliant cavaliers and ladies he had known, or rather had bodied forth in his own image that he might live in the company of his peers. The air resounded with songs and sighs and kisses, with word-plays and laughter. It was a dreamland, a paradise of dainty lovers.

How differently does he now conceive of the solitude of the country! It has become to him the one thing in life, the refuge, the sanctuary. It means for him an atmosphere of purity, the home of spiritual health, the stronghold of innocence, the one safe retreat for whoso would flee from the pestilence of falsehood and perfidy that rages in courts and cities.

There no one can escape it. But now, we must observe, Shakespeare no longer regards this contagion of untruth and unfaith with the eyes of a Timon. He now looks down from higher and clearer altitudes.

It is true that no one can keep his life wholly free from falsehood, deceit, and violence towards others. But neither falsehood nor deceit, nor even violence is always and inevitably a crime; it is often a necessity, a legitimate weapon, a right. At bottom, Shakespeare had always held that there were no such things as unconditional duties and absolute prohibitions. He had never, for example, questioned Hamlet's right to kill the king, scarcely even his right to run his sword through Polonius. Nevertheless he had hitherto been unable to conquer a feeling of indignation and disgust when he saw around him nothing but breaches of the simplest moral laws. Now, on the other hand, the dim divinations of his earlier years crystallised in his mind into a coherent body of thought to this effect: no commandment is unconditional; it is not in the observance or non-observance of an external fiat that the merit of an action, to say nothing of a character, consists; everything depends upon the volitional substance into which the individual, as a responsible agent, transmutes the formal imperative at the moment of decision.

In other words, Shakespeare now sees clearly that the ethics of intention are the only true, the only possible ethics.

Imogen says (iv. 2):

> "If I do lie, and do
> No harm by it, though the gods hear, I hope
> They'll pardon it."

Pisanio says in his soliloquy (iii. 5):

> "Thou bidd'st me to my loss: for, true to thee,
> Were to prove false, which I will never be
> To him that is most true."

And he hits the nail on the head when he characterises himself in these words (iv. 3):

> "Wherein I am false, I am honest; not true, to be true."

That is to say, he lies and deceives because he cannot help it; but his character is none the worse, nay, all the better on that account. He disobeys his master, and thereby merits his gratitude; he hoodwinks Cloten, and therein he does well.

In the same way, all the nobler characters fly in the face of accepted moral laws. Imogen disobeys her father and braves his wrath, and even his curse, because she will not renounce the husband of her choice. So, too, she afterwards deceives the young men in the forest by appearing in male attire and under an assumed name—untruthfully, and yet with a higher truth, calling herself Fidele, the faithful one. So, too, the upright Belarius robs the king of both his sons, but thereby saves them for him and for the country; and during their whole boyhood he puts them off, for their own good, with false accounts of things. So, too, the honest physician deceives the queen, whose wickedness he has divined, by giving her an opiate in place of a poison, and thereby baffling her attempt at murder. So, too, Guiderius acts rightly in taking the law into his own hands, and answering Cloten's insults by killing him at sight and cutting off his head. He thus, without knowing it, prevents the brutish idiot's intended violence to Imogen.

Thus all the good characters commit acts of deception, violence, and falsehood, or even live their whole life under false colours, without in the least derogating from their moral worth.

They touch evil without defilement, even if they suffer and now and then feel themselves insecure in their strained relations to truth and right.

Beyond all doubt, it must have been actual and intimate experience that first darkened Shakespeare's view of life, and then opened his eyes again to its brighter aspects. But it is the idea which he here indirectly expresses that seems to have played the essential and decisive part in uplifting his spirit above the mood of mere hatred and contempt for humanity: the realisation that the quality of a given act depends rather on the agent than on the act itself. Although it be true, for example, that falsehood and deceit encounter us on every hand, it does not necessarily follow that human nature is utterly corrupt. Neither deceit nor any other course of action in conflict with moral law is absolutely and unconditionally wrong. The majority, indeed, of those who speak falsely and act unlawfully are an ignoble crew; but even the best, the noblest, may systematically transgress the moral law and be good and noble still. This is the meaning of moral self-government; the only true morality consists in following out our own ends, by our own means, and on our own responsibility. The only real and binding laws are those which we lay down for ourselves, and it is the breach of these laws alone that degrades us.

Seen from this point of view, the world puts on a less gloomy aspect. The poet is no longer impelled by a spiritual necessity to bring down his curtain to the notes of the trump of doom, to make all voyages end in shipwreck, all dramas issue in annihilation, or even to leaven the tragedy of life with consistent scorn and execration for humanity at large.

In his present frame of mind there is a touch of weary tolerance. He no longer cares to dwell upon the harsh realities of life; he seeks distraction in dreaming. And he dreams of retribution, of the suppression of the utterly vile (the queen dies, Cloten is killed), of letting mercy season justice in the treatment of certain human beasts of prey (Iachimo), and of preserving a little circle, a chosen few, whom neither the errors into which passion has led them, nor the acts of deceit and violence they have committed in self-defence, render unworthy of our sympathies. Life on earth is still worth living so long as there are women like Imogen and men like her brothers. She, indeed, is an ideal,

and they creatures of romance; but their existence is a condition-precedent of poetry.

It is to this fertilising mist of feeling, this productive trend of thought, that the play owes its origin.

Shakespeare has so far taken heart again that he can give us something more and something better than poetical fragments or plays which, like his recent ones, produce a powerful but harsh effect. He will once more unroll a large, various, and many-coloured panorama.

The action of *Cymbeline*, like that of *Lear*, is only nominally located in pre-Christian England. There is not the slightest attempt at representation of the period, and the barbarism depicted is mediæval rather than antique. For the rest, the starting-point of *Cymbeline* vaguely resembles that of *Lear*. Cymbeline is causelessly estranged from Imogen, as Lear is from Cordelia; there is something in Cymbeline's weakness and folly that recalls the unreason of Lear. But in the older play everything is tragically designed and in the great manner, whereas here the whole action is devised with a happy end in view.

The consort of this pitiful king is a crafty and ambitious woman, who, by alternately flattering and defying him, has got him entirely under her thumb. She says herself (i. 2):—

> "I never do him wrong
> But he does buy my injuries to be friends,
> Pays dear for my offences."

In other words, she knows that she can always find her profit in a scene of reconciliation. Her object is to make Imogen the wife of Cloten, her son by a former marriage, and thus to secure for him the succession to the throne. This scheme of hers is the original source of all the misfortunes which overwhelm the heroine. For Imogen loves Posthumus, in spite of his poverty a paragon among men, and cannot be induced to renounce the husband she has chosen. Therefore the play opens with the banishment of Posthumus.

The characters and incidents of Shakespeare's own invention give perspective to the play, the underplot forming a parallel to the main action, as the story of Gloucester and his cruel son forms a parallel to that of Lear and his heartless daughters. Belarius, a soldier and statesman, has twenty years ago fallen into unmerited

disgrace with Cymbeline, who, listening to the voice of calumny, has outlawed him with the same unreasoning passion with which he now sends Posthumus into exile. In revenge for this wrong, Belarius has carried off Cymbeline's two sons, who have ever since lived with him in a lonely place among the mountains, believing him to be their father. To them comes Imogen in her hour of need, disguised as a boy, and is received with the utmost warmth and tenderness by the brothers, who do not know her, and whom she does not know. One of them, Guiderius, kills Cloten, who insulted and challenged him. Both the young men take up arms to meet the Roman invaders, and, together with Belarius and Posthumus, they save their father's kingdom.

Gervinus has acutely and justly remarked that the fundamental contrast expressed in their story, as in Cymbeline's political situation, in Imogen's relation to Posthumus and Pisanio's relation to them both, is precisely the dual contrast expressed in the English words *true* and *false*—*true* meaning at once "veracious" and "faithful" (ideas which, in the play, shade off into each other), while *false*, in like manner, means both "mendacious" and "faithless."

Life at court is beset with treacherous quicksands. The king is stupid, passionate, perpetually misguided; the queen is a wily murderess; and between them stands her son, Cloten, one of Shakespeare's most original figures, a true creation of genius, without a rival in all the poet's long gallery of fools and dullards. His stupid inefficiency and undisguised malignity have nothing in common with his mother's hypocritical and supple craft; he takes after her in worthlessness alone.

For the sake of an inartistic stage effect, Shakespeare has endowed him with a bodily frame indistinguishable from that of the handsome Posthumus, leaving it to his head alone to express the world-wide difference between them. But how admirably has the poet characterised the dolt and boor by making him shoot forth his words with an explosive stammer! With profound humour and delicate observation, he has endowed him with the loftiest notions of his own dignity, and given him no shadow of doubt as to his rights. There are no bounds to his vanity, his coarseness, his bestiality. If words could do it, not a word of his but would wound others to the quick. And not only his words, but his intents are of the most malignant; he would outrage Imogen at

Milford Haven and "spurn her home" to her father. His stupidity, fortunately, renders him less dangerous, and with delicate art Shakespeare has managed to make him from first to last produce a comic effect, thereby softening the painful impression of the portraiture. We take pleasure in him as in Caliban, whom he foreshadows, and who had the same designs upon Miranda as he upon Imogen. We might even describe Caliban as Cloten developed into a type, a symbol.

It is such personages as these that compose the world which Belarius depicts to Guiderius and Arviragus (iii. 3), when the two youths repine against the inactivity of their lonely forest life, and yearn to plunge into the social turmoil and "drink delight of battle with their peers:"

> "How you speak!
> Did you but know the city's usuries,
> And felt them knowingly: the art o' the court,
> As hard to leave as keep; whose top to climb
> Is certain falling, or so slippery, that
> The fear's as bad as falling: the toil o' the war,
> A pain that only seems to seek out danger
> I' the name of fame and honour; which dies i' the search,
> And hath as oft a slanderous epitaph
> As record of fair act; nay, many times
> Doth ill deserve by doing well; what's worse,
> Must court'sy at the censure.—O boys! this story
> The world may read in me."

Amid these surroundings two personages have grown up whom Shakespeare would have us regard as beings of a loftier order.

He has taken all possible pains, from the very first scene of the play, to inspire the spectator with the highest conception of Posthumus. One nobleman speaks of him to another in terms such as, in bygone days, the poet had applied to Henry Percy:

> "He liv'd in court
> (Which rare it is to do) most prais'd, most lov'd;
> A sample to the youngest, to the more mature
> A glass that feated them; and to the graver
> A child that guided dotards."

A little farther on, Iachimo says of him to Imogen (i. 6):

> "He sits 'mongst men like a descended god;
> He hath a kind of honour sets him off
> More than a mortal seeming;"

and finally, at the close of the play (v. 5), "He was the best of all, amongst the rar'st of good ones"—an appreciation which it is a pity Iachimo did not arrive at a little sooner, as it might have prevented him from committing his villainies. Shakespeare throws into relief the dignity and repose of Posthumus, and his self-possession when the king denounces and banishes him. We see that he obeys because he regards it as unavoidable, though he has set at naught the king's will in relation to Imogen. In the compulsory haste of his leave-taking, he shows himself penetrated with a sense of his inferiority to her, and appeals to us by the way in which he tempers the loftiness of his bearing towards the outer world with a graceful humility towards his wife. It is rather surprising that he never for a moment seems to think of carrying Imogen with him into exile. This passivity is probably explained by her reluctance to take any step not absolutely forced upon her, that should render more difficult an eventual reconciliation. He will wait for better times, and long and hope for them.

As he is on the point of departure, Cloten forces himself upon him, insults and challenges him. He remains unruffled, ignores the challenge, contemptuously turns his back upon the oaf, and calmly leaves him to entertain the courtiers with boasts of his own valour and the cowardice of Posthumus, well knowing that no one will believe him.

The character, then, is well sketched out. But his mediæval fable compelled Shakespeare to introduce traits which, in the light of our humaner age, seem inconsistent and inadmissible. No man with any decency of feeling would in our days make such a wager as his; no man would give a stranger, and one, moreover, who is to all appearance a vain and quite unscrupulous woman-hunter, the warmest and most insistent letter of recommendation to his wife; and still less would any one give the same man an unwritten license to employ every means in his power to shake her virtue, simply in order to enjoy his discomfiture when all his arts shall have failed. And even if we could forgive or excuse such con-

duct in Posthumus, we cannot possibly extend our tolerance to his easy credulity when Iachimo boasts of his conquest, his insane fury against Imogen, and the base falsehood of the letter he sends her in order to facilitate Pisanio's murderous task. Even in the worst of cases we do not admit a man's right to have a woman assassinated because she has forgotten her love for him. They thought otherwise in the days of the Renaissance; they did not look so closely into the plots of the old *novelle*, and were content, in the domain of romance, with traditional views of right and duty.

Nevertheless, Shakespeare has done what he could to mitigate the painful impression produced by Posthumus's conduct. Long before he knows that Iachimo has deceived him, he repents of his cruel deed, bitterly deplores that Pisanio has (as he thinks) obeyed him, and speaks in the warmest terms of Imogen's worth. He says, for instance (v. 4):

> "For Imogen's dear life take mine; and though
> 'Tis not so dear, yet 'tis a life."

He imposes upon himself the sternest penance. He comes to England with the Roman army, and then, nameless and disguised as a peasant, fights against the invaders. Together with Belarius and the king's sons, he is instrumental in staying the flight of the Britons, freeing Cymbeline, who has already been taken prisoner, winning the battle, and saving the kingdom. This done, he once more assumes his Roman garb, and seeks death at the hands of his countrymen, whose saviour he has been. He is taken prisoner and brought before the king, when all is cleared up.

From the moment he sets foot on English ground, there is in his course of action a more high-pitched and overstrained idealism than we are apt to find in Shakespeare's heroes—a craving for self-imposed expiation. Still the character fails to strike us as the perfect whole the poet would fain make of it. Posthumus impresses us, not as a favourite of the gods, but as a man whose penitence is as unbridled and excessive as his blind passion.

Far other is the case of Imogen. In her perfection is indeed attained. She is the noblest and most adorable womanly figure Shakespeare has ever drawn, and at the same time the most

various. He has drawn spiritual women before her—Desdemona, Cordelia—but the secret of their being could be expressed in two words. He has also drawn brilliant women—Beatrice, Rosalind—whereas Imogen is not brilliant at all. Nevertheless she is designed and depicted as incomparable among her sex—"she is alone the Arabian bird." We see her in the most various situations, and she is equal to them all. We see her exposed to trial after trial, each harder than the last, and she emerges from them all, not only scatheless, but with her rare and enchanting qualities thrown into ever stronger relief.

At the very outset she gives proof of perfect self-command in her relation to her weak and passionate father, her false and venomous stepmother. The treasure of tenderness that fills her soul betrays itself in her parting from Posthumus, in her passionate regret that she could not give him one kiss more, and in the fervour with which she reproaches Pisanio for having left the shore before his master's ship had quite sunk below the horizon. During his absence her thoughts are unceasingly fixed on him. She repels with firmness the advances of her clownish wooer, Cloten. Brought face to face with Iachimo, she first receives him graciously, then sees through him at once when he begins to speak ill of Posthumus, and finally treats him with princely dignity when he has excused his offensive speeches as nothing but an ill-timed jest.

Next comes the bedroom scene, in which she falls asleep, and Iachimo, as she slumbers, paints for us her exquisite purity. Then we have her disdainful dismissal of Cloten; her reception of the letter from Posthumus; her calm confronting (as it seems) of certain death; her exquisite communion with her brothers; her death-like sleep and horrorstruck awakening beside the body which she takes to be her husband's; her denunciations of Pisanio as the supposed murderer; and, finally, the moment of reunion—all scenes which are pearls of Shakespeare's art, the rarest jewels in his diadem, never outshone in the poetry of any nation.

He depicts her as born for happiness, but early inured to suffering, and therefore calm and collected. When Posthumus is banished, she acquiesces in the separation; she will live in the memory of her love. Every one commiserates her; herself, she scarcely complains. She wishes no evil to her enemies; at the end, when the detestable queen is dead, she laments her father's

bereavement, little dreaming that nothing but the death of the murderess could have saved her father's life.

Only one relation in life can stir her to passionate utterance—her relation to Posthumus. When she takes leave of him she says (i. 2):

> "You must be gone;
> And I shall here abide the hourly shot
> Of angry eyes; not comforted to live,
> But that there is this jewel in the world,
> That I may see again."

And to his farewell she replies:

> "Nay, stay a little.
> Were you but riding forth to air yourself,
> Such parting were too petty."

When he is gone she cries:

> "There cannot be a pinch in death
> More sharp than this is."

Her father's upbraidings leave her cold:

> "I am senseless of your wrath; a touch more rare
> Subdues all pangs, all fears."

To his continued reproaches she only replies with a rapturous eulogy of Posthumus:

> "He is
> A man worth any woman; overbuys me
> Almost the sum he pays."

And her passion deepens after her husband's departure. She envies the handkerchief he has kissed; she laments that she could not watch his receding ship; she would have "broke her eye-strings" to see the last of it. He has been torn away from her while she had yet "most pretty things to say;" how she would think of him and beg him to think of her at three fixed hours of every day; and she would have made him swear not to forget her for any "she of Italy." He was gone before she could give him the parting kiss which she had set "betwixt two charming words."

She is devoid of ambition. She would willingly exchange her

royal station for idyllic happiness in a country retreat such as that for which Shakespeare is now longing. When Posthumus has left her she exclaims (i. 2):

> "Would I were
> A neatherd's daughter, and my Leonatus
> Our neighbour shepherd's son!"

In other words, she sighs for the lot in life which we shall find in *The Winter's Tale* apportioned to Prince Florizel and Princess Perdita. In the same spirit she reflects before the coming of Iachimo (i. 7):

> "Blessed be those,
> How mean soe'er, that have their honest wills,
> Which seasons comfort."

And then when Iachimo ("little Iago") slanders Posthumus to her, as he will presently slander her to Posthumus, how different is her conduct from her husband's! She has turned pale at his entrance, at Pisanio's mere announcement of a nobleman from Rome with letters from her lord. To Iachimo's first whispers of Posthumus's infidelity, she merely answers:

> "My lord, I fear,
> Has forgot Britain."

But when Iachimo proceeds to draw a gloating picture of her husband's debaucheries, and offers himself as an instrument for her revenge upon the faithless one, she replies with the exclamation:

> "What, ho, Pisanio!"

She summons her servant; she has seen all she wants of this Italian.

Even when she says nothing she fills the scene, as when, having gone to rest, she lies in bed reading, dismisses her attendant, closes the book and falls asleep. How wonderfully has Shakespeare brought home to us the atmosphere of purity in this sleeping-chamber by means of the passionate words he places in the mouth of Iachimo (ii. 2):

> "Cytherea,
> How bravely thou becom'st thy bed! fresh lily,
> And whiter than the sheets! That I might touch!

But kiss; one kiss!—Rubies unparagon'd,
How dearly they do't!—'Tis her breathing that
Perfumes the chamber thus."

The influence of this scene — interpreting as it does the overpowering impression that emanates even from the material surroundings of exquisite womanhood, the almost magical glamour of purity and loveliness combined — may in all probability be traced in the rapture expressed by Goethe's Faust when he and Mephistopheles enter Gretchen's chamber. Iachimo is here the love-sick Faust and the malign Mephistopheles in one. Remember Faust's outburst:

"Willkommen, süsser Dämmerschein,
Der Du dies Heiligthum durchwebst
Ergreif mein Herz, du süsse Liebespein,
Die Du vom Thau der Hoffnung schmachtend lebst!
Wie athmet hier Gefühl der Stille."

Despite the difference between the two situations, there can be no doubt that the one has influenced the other.[1]

As though in ecstasy over this incomparable creation, Shakespeare once more bursts forth into song. Once and again he pays her lyric homage; here in Cloten's morning song, "Hark, hark, the lark at heaven's gate sings," and afterwards in the dirge her brother's chant over what they believe to be her dead body.

Shakespeare makes her lose her self-control for the first time when Cloten ventures to speak disparagingly of her husband, calling him a "base wretch," a beggar "foster'd with cold dishes, with scraps o' the court," "a hilding for a livery," and so on.

[1] Scarcely any poet has been more followed in modern times than Shakespeare. We have already drawn attention to the by no means accidental resemblances in Voltaire, Goethe, and Schiller, and we have further instances. Schiller's *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* is markedly indebted to the first part of *Henry VI.* The scene between the maid and the Duke of Burgundy (ii. 10) is fashioned after the corresponding scene in Shakespeare (iii. 3), and that between the maid and her father in Schiller (iv. 11) answers to Shakespeare's (v. 4). The apothecary in Oehlenschläger's *Aladdin* is borrowed from the apothecary in *Romeo and Juliet.* In Björnstjerne's Björnson's *Maria Stuart* (ii. 2) Ruthven rises from a sick bed to totter into the conspirators with Knox, and take the more eager share in the plot to murder Rizzio, as the sick Ligarius makes his way to Brutus (*Julius Cæsar*, ii. 1) to join the conspiracy to murder Cæsar.

Then she bursts forth into words of more than masculine violence, and almost as opprobrious as Cloten's own (ii. 3):

> "Profane fellow!
> Wert thou the son of Jupiter, and no more
> But what thou art besides, thou wert too base
> To be his groom: thou wert dignified enough,
> Even to the point of envy, if 't were made
> Comparative for your virtues, to be styl'd
> The under-hangman of his kingdom, and hated
> For being preferr'd so well."

It is in the same flush of anger that she speaks the words which first sting Cloten to comic fury, and then inspire him with his hideous design. Leonatus' meanest garment, she says, is "dearer in her respect" than Cloten's whole person—an expression which rankles in the mind of the noxious dullard, until at last it drives him out of his senses.

New charm and new nobility breathe around her in the scene in which she receives the letter from her husband, designed to lure her to her death. First all her enthusiasm, and then all her passion, blaze forth and burn with the clearest flame. Hear this (iii. 2):

> "*Pisanio.* Madam, here is a letter from my lord.
> *Imogen.* Who? thy lord? that is my lord: Leonatus.
> O learn'd indeed were that astronomer
> That knew the stars as I his characters;
> He'd lay the future open.—You good gods,
> Let what is here contain'd relish of love,
> Of my lord's health, of his content,—yet not,
> That we two are asunder,—let that grieve him:
> Some griefs are medicinable; that is one of them,
> For it doth physic love:—of his content,
> All but in that!—Good wax, thy leave.—Bless'd be
> You bees, that make these locks of counsel!"

She reads that her lord appoints a meeting-place at Milford Haven, little dreaming that she is summoned there only to be murdered:

> "O for a horse with wings!—Hear'st thou, Pisanio?
> He is at Milford Haven: read, and tell me

How far 'tis thither. If one of mean affairs
May plod it in a week, why may not I
Glide thither in a day?—Then, true Pisanio,
(Who long'st, like me, to see thy lord; who long'st,—
O let me 'bate!—but not like me;—yet long'st,—
But in a fainter kind:—O not like me,
For mine's beyond beyond) say, and speak thick,
(Love's counsellor should fill the bores of hearing,
To the smothering of the sense), how far it is
To this same blessed Milford: and, by the way,
Tell me how Wales was made so happy as
To inherit such a haven: but, first of all,
How we may steal from hence; and, for the gap
That we shall make in time, from our hencegoing
And our return, to excuse: but first, how get hence:
Why should excuse be born or e'er begot?
We'll talk of that hereafter. . . . Prithee, speak,
How many score of miles may we well ride
'Twixt hour and hour?
Pis. One score, 'twixt sun and sun,
Madam's, enough for you: [*Aside*] and too much too.
Imo. Why, one that rode to 's execution, man,
Could never go so slow; I have heard of riding wagers,
Where horses have been nimbler than the sands
That run i' the clock's behalf. But this is foolery:
Go bid my woman feign a sickness."

These outbursts are beyond all praise; but quite on a level with them stands her answer when Pisanio shows her Posthumus's letter to him, denouncing her with the foulest epithets, and the whole extent of her misfortune becomes clear to her. It is then she utters the words (iii. 4) which Sören Kierkegaard admired so deeply:

"False to his bed! what is it to be false?
To lie in watch there and to think on him?
To weep 'twixt clock and clock? if sleep charge nature
To break it with a fearful dream of him
And cry myself awake? that's false to's bed, is it?!"

It is very characteristic that she never for a moment believes that Posthumus can really think it possible she should have given

herself to another. She seeks another explanation for his inexplicable conduct:

> "Some jay of Italy,
> Whose mother was her painting, hath betray'd him."

This is scant comfort to her, however, and she implores Pisanio, who would spare her, to strike, for life has now lost all value for her. As she is baring her breast to the blow, she speaks these admirable words:

> "Come, here's my heart:
> Something's afore 't:—soft, soft! we'll no defence;
> Obedient as the scabbard.—What is here?
> The scriptures of the loyal Leonatus,
> All turn'd to heresy? Away, away,
> Corrupters of my faith! you shall no more
> Be stomachers to my heart."

With the same intentness, or rather with the same tenderness, has Shakespeare, all through the play, imbued himself with her spirit, never losing touch of her for a moment, but lovingly filling in trait upon trait, until at last he represents her, half in jest, as the sun of the play. The king says in the concluding scene:

> "See,
> Posthumus anchors upon Imogen;
> And she, like harmless lightning, throws her eye
> On him, her brothers, me, her master, hitting
> Each object with a joy: the counterchange
> Is severally in all."

Early in the play Imogen expressed the wish that she were a neatherd's daughter, and Leonatus a shepherd's son. Later, when, clad in manly attire, she chances upon the lonely forest cave in which her brothers dwell, she feels completely at ease in their neighbourhood, and in the primitive life for which she has always longed—as Shakespeare longs for it now. The brothers are happy with her, and she with them. She says (Act iii. sc. 6):

> "Pardon me, gods!
> I'd change my sex to be companions with them,
> Since Leonatus's false."

And later (Act iv. sc. 2):

> "These are kind creatures. Gods! what lies I have heard!!
> Our courtiers say all's savage but at court."

Belarius exclaims in the same spirit (Act iii. sc. 3):

> "Oh, this life
> Is nobler than attending for a check,
> Richer than doing nothing for a bauble,
> Prouder than rustling in unpaid for silk."

The princes, in whom the royal soldierly blood asserts itself in a thirst for adventure, reply in a contrary strain:

> "*Guiderius.* Haply this life is best
> If quiet life be best; sweeter to you
> That have a sharper known; well corresponding
> With your stiff age; but unto us it is
> A call of ignorance, travelling a-bed;
> A prison for a debtor, that not dares
> To stride a limit."

And his brother adds:

> "What should we speak of
> When we are as old as you? When we shall hear
> The rain and wind beat dark December. . . .
> . . . . . We have seen nothing;
> We are beastly."

Shakespeare has diffused a marvellous poetry throughout this forest idyl; a matchless freshness and primitive charm pervade the whole. In this period of detestation for the abortions of culture, the poet has beguiled himself by picturing a life far from all civilisation, an innately noble youth in a natural state, and he depicts two young men who have seen nothing of life and never looked upon the face of woman; whose days have been passed in the pursuit of game, and who, like the Homeric warriors, prepared and cooked with their own hands the spoil procured by their bows and arrows. But their race shines through, and they prove of better stock than we should have looked for in the sons of the contemptible Cymbeline. Their instincts all tend towards the noble and princely ideal.

In the Spanish drama, which twenty-five years later received such an impetus under Calderon, it became a leading motive to portray young men and women brought up in solitude without having seen a single being of the other sex, and without knowledge of their rank and parentage. Thus in Calderon's *Life is a Dream* (*La vida es sueño*) of 1635, we are shown a king's son leading a solitary life in utter ignorance of his royal descent. He is seized by a passionate love on his first meeting with mankind, and is crudely violent in the face of any opposition, but, like the princes in *Cymbeline*, the seeds of majesty are lying dormant and the princely instincts spring readily into life. In the play *En esta vida todo as verdad y todo es mentira* of 1647, a faithful servant carries off the emperor's son from the pursuit of a tyrant, and seeks refuge in a mountain cave of Sicily. He also takes charge of a base-born son of the tyrant, and the two lads are brought up together. They see no one but their foster-father, are clad in the skins of animals and live upon game and fruit. When the tyrant appears to claim his child and slay the emperor's son, none can tell him which is which, and neither threats nor entreaties can prevail upon the servant to yield the secret. Here, as in *Life is a Dream*, the first glimpse of a woman rouses instant love in both young men. In *A Daughter of the Air* (*La hija del ayre*) of 1664, Semiramis is brought up by an old priest, as Miranda is by Prospero in *The Tempest*. Like all these beings reared in solitude remote from the turmoil of life, Semiramis nourishes an impatient longing to be out in the world. In the two plays of 1672, *Eco y Narciso* and *El monstruo de los jardines*, Calderon employs a variation of the same idea. Narcissus in the one and Achilles in the other are brought up in solitude in order that we may see all the emotions aroused, especially those of love and jealousy, in a being so primitive that it cannot even name its own sensations.

In this episode, and throughout this last period of his poetry, Shakespeare entered a realm which the imagination of the Latin races immediately seized upon and made their own. But in all their dramatic poetry of this nature they never surpassed that of the English poet.

He refrained entirely from the erotic in this idyl, and instead of the demands of a lover's passion, he portrayed unconscious brotherly love offered to a sister disguised as a boy. Imogen

and the two strong-natured, high-minded youths dwell charmingly together, but their companionship is destroyed in the bud when Imogen, after having drunk the narcotic supplied by the physician to the queen instead of poison, lies as one dead. A gently touching element is introduced into this moving play when the two brothers bear her forth and sing over her bier. We witness a burial without rites or ceremonies, requiems or church formalities, an attempt being made to fill their place with spontaneous natural symbols. A similar attempt was made by Goethe in the double chorus sung over Mignon's body in *Wilhelm Meister* (Book VIII. chap. viii.). Imogen's head is laid towards the east, and the brothers sing over her the beautiful duet which their father had taught them at the burial of their mother. Its rhythm contains the germ of all that later became Shelley's poetry.

The first verse runs:

> "Fear no more the heat of sun,
> Nor the furious winter's rages;
> Thou thy worldly task hast done,
> Home art gone and ta'en thy wages:
> Golden lads and girls all must
> As chimney-sweeper, come to dust."[1]

The concluding verses, in which the voices are heard first in solo and then in duets, form a wonderful harmony of metric and poetic art.

This idyl, in which he found and expressed his reawakened love for the heart of Nature, has been worked out by Shakespeare with especial tenderness. He by no means intended to represent a flight from scorn of mankind as a thing desirable in itself, but merely to depict solitude as a refuge for the weary, and existence in the country as a happiness for those who have done with life.

As a drama, *Cymbeline* contains more of the nature of intrigue than any earlier play. There is no little skill displayed in the way Pisanio misleads Cloten by showing him Posthumus's letter, and where Imogen takes the headless Cloten, attired in Posthumus's clothes, for her murdered husband. The mythological dream

[1] It is somewhat remarkable that Guiderius and Arviragus should know anything about chimney-sweepers.

vision seems to have been interpolated for use at court festivities. The explanatory tablet left by Jupiter, and the king's joyful outburst in the last scene, "Am I a mother to the birth of three?" prove that even at his fullest and ripest Shakespeare was never securely possessed of an unfailing good taste, but such trifling errors of judgment are more than counterbalanced by the overflowing richness of the fairylike poetry of this drama.

XIX

WINTER'S TALE—AN EPIC TURN—CHILDLIKE FORMS—THE PLAY AS A MUSICAL STUDY—SHAKESPEARE'S ÆSTHETIC CONFESSION OF FAITH

WE are now about to see Shakespeare enthralled and reinspired by the glamour of fairy tale and romance.

The *Winter's Tale* was first printed in the Folio of 1623, but, as we have already mentioned, an entry in Dr. Simon Forman's diary informs us that he saw it played at the Globe Theatre on the 15th of May 1611. A notice in the official diary of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, goes to prove that at that date the play was quite new. "For the king's players. An olde playe called Winter's Tale, formerly allowed of by Sir George Bucke, and likewyse by mee on Mr. Hemmings his word that nothing profane was added or reformed, though the allowed book was missinge; and therefore I returned itt without fee this 19th of August 1623." The Sir George Bucke mentioned here did not receive his official appointment as censor until August 1610. Therefore it was probably one of the first performances of the *Winter's Tale* at which Forman was present in the spring of 1611.

We have already drawn attention to Ben Jonson's little fling at the play in the introduction to his *Bartholomew's Fair* in 1614.

The play was founded on a romance of Robert Greene's, published in 1588 under the title of "Pandosto, the Triumph of Time," and was re-named half-a-century later "The Historie of Dorastus and Fawnia." So popular was it, that it was printed again and again. We know of at least seventeen editions, and in all likelihood there were more.

Shakespeare had adapted Lodge's *Rosalynde* in his earlier pastoral play, *As You Like It*, very soon after its publication in 1590. It is significant that this other tale, with its peculiar

blending of the pathetic and idyllic, should only now, though it must have long been familiar to him, strike him as suitable for dramatic treatment. Karl Elze's theory that Shakespeare had adapted the story in some earlier work, which Greene had in his mind when he wrote his famous and violent accusation of plagiarism, cannot be considered as more than a random conjecture. Greene's attack was sufficiently accounted for by that remodelling and adaptation of older works which was practised by the young poet from the very first, and it clearly aimed at *Henry VI.*

Shakespeare, who could not, of course, use Greene's title, called his play *A Winter's Tale;* a title which would convey an impression, at that time, of a serious and touching or exciting story, and he plainly strove for a dream-like and fantastic effect in his work. Mamillius says, when he begins his little story (Act ii. sc. 1), "A sad tale's best for winter," and in three different places the romantic impossibility of the plot is impressed upon the audience. In the description of the discovery of Perdita we are warned that "this news, which is called true, is so like an old tale, that the verity of it is in strong suspicion" (Act v. sc. 2).

The geographical extravagances are those of the romance; it was Greene who surrounded Bohemia with the sea and transferred the Oracle of Delphi to the Island of Delphos. But Shakespeare contributed the anachronisms; it was he who made the oracle exist contemporaneously with Russia as an empire, who made Hermione a daughter of a Russian Emperor and caused her statue to be executed by Giulio Romano. The religion of the play is decidedly vague, the very characters themselves seem to forget at times what they are, one moment figuring as Christians, and the next worshipping Jupiter and Proserpina. In the same play in which a pilgrimage is made to Delphi to obtain an oracle, a shepherd lad says there is "but one puritan amongst them, and he sings songs to hornpipes" (Act iv. sc. 2). All this is unintentional, no doubt, but it greatly adds to the general fairy tale effect.

We do not know why Shakespeare transposed the localities. In Greene's book the tragedy of the play occurs in Bohemia, and the idyllic part in Sicily; in the drama the situations are reversed. It might be that Bohemia seemed to him a more suitable country

for the exposure of an infant than the better known and more thickly populated island of the Mediterranean.

All the main features of the play are drawn from Greene, first and foremost the king's unreasonable jealousy because his wife, at his own urgent request, invites Polixenes to prolong his stay and speaks to him in friendly fashion. Among the grounds of jealousy enumerated by Greene was the naïve and dramatically unsuitable one that Bellaria, in her desire to please and obey her husband by showing every attention to his guest, frequently entered his bed-chamber to ascertain if anything was needed there.[1] Greene's queen really dies when she is cast off by the king in his jealous madness, but this tragic episode, which would have deprived him of his reconciliation scene, was not adopted by Shakespeare. He did, however, include and amplify the death of Mamillius, their little son, who pines away from sorrow for the king's harsh treatment of his mother. Mamillius is one of the gems of the play; a finer sketch of a gifted, large-hearted child could not be. We can but feel that Shakespeare, in drawing this picture of the young boy and his early death, must once again have had his own little son in his mind, and that it was of him he was thinking when he makes Polixenes say of his young prince (Act i. sc. 2):

> "If at home, sir,
> He's all my exercise, my mirth, my matter;
> Now my sworn friend, and then mine enemy;
> My parasite, my soldier, statesman, all:
> He makes a July's day short as December;
> And with his varying childness, cures in me
> Thoughts that would thick my blood."
> *Leontes.* So stands this squire
> Offic'd with me."

The father's tone towards little Mamillius is at first a jesting one.

> "Mamillius, art thou my boy?"
> *Mamillius.* Ay, my good lord.
> *Leontes.* Why, that's my bawcock. What, hast smutch'd thy nose?
> They say it is a copy out of mine."

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[1] *The Historie of Dorastus and Fawnia.* Shakespeare's Library. T. P. Collins. Vol. i. p. 7.

Later, when jealousy grows upon him, he cries:

> "Come, sir page,
> Look on me with your welkin eye: sweet villain!
> Most dear'st! my collop!—Can thy dam?—may'st be?"

The children of the French poets of the middle and end of that century were never childlike. They would have made a little prince destined to a sad and early death talk solemnly and maturely, like little Joas in Racine's *Athelie;* but Shakespeare had no hesitation in letting his princeling talk like a real child. He says to the lady-in-waiting who offers to play with him:

> "No, I'll none of you.
> *1st Lady.* Why, my sweet lord?
> *Mamillius.* You'll kiss me hard, and speak to me as if
> I were a baby still."

He announces that he likes another lady better because her eyebrows are black and fine; and he knows that eyebrows are most becoming when they are shaped like a half-moon, and look as though drawn with a pen.

> "*2nd Lady.* Who taught you this?
> *Mamillius.* I learn'd it out of women's faces. Pray, now,
> What colour are your eyebrows?
> *1st Lady.* Blue, my lord.
> *Mam.* Nay, that's a mock; I have seen a lady's nose
> That has been blue, but not her eyebrows."

The tale he is about to tell is cut short by the entrance of the furious king.

During the trial scene, which forms a parallel to that in *Henry VIII.*, tidings are brought of the prince's death (Act iii. sc. 1):

> "——whose honourable thoughts
> (Thoughts too high for one so tender) cleft the heart
> That could conceive a gross and foolish fire
> Blemished his gracious dam."

In Greene's tale the death of the child causes that of his mother, but in the play, where it follows immediately upon the king's defiant rejection of the oracle, it effects a sudden revulsion of feeling in him as a punishment direct from Heaven. Shakespeare

allowed Hermione to be merely reported dead because his mood at this time required that the play should end happily. That Mamilius seems to pass entirely out of every one's memory is only another proof of a fact we have already touched upon, namely, Shakespeare's negligent style of work in these last years of his working life. The poet, however, is careful to keep Hermione well in mind; she is brought before us in the vision Antigonus sees shortly before his death, and she is preserved during sixteen years of solitude that she may be restored to us at the last. It is, indeed, chiefly by her personality that the two markedly distinct parts of this wasp-waisted play are held together.

Although, as in Pericles, there is more of an epic than a dramatic character about the work, it possesses a certain unity of tone and feeling. As a painting may contain two comparatively unconnected groups which are yet united by a general harmony of line and colouring, so, in this apparently disconnected plot, there is an all-pervading poetic harmony which we may call the tone or spirit of the play. Shakespeare was careful from the first that its melancholy should not grow to such an incurable gloom as to prevent our enjoyment of the charming scenes between Florizel and Perdita at the sheep-shearing festival, or the thievish tricks of the rascal Autolycus. The poet sought to make each chord of feeling struck during the play melt away in the gentle strain of reconciliation at the close. If Hermione had returned to the king at once, which would have been the most natural course of events, the play would have ended with the third act. She therefore disappears, finally returning to life and the embrace of the weeping Leontes in the semblance of a statue.

Looked upon from a purely abstract point of view, as though it were a musical composition, the play might be considered in the light of a soul's history. Beginning with powerful emotions, suspense and dread; with terrible mistakes entailing deserved and undeserved suffering, it leads to a despair which in turn gradually yields to forgetfulness and levity; but not lastingly. Once alone with its helpless grief and hopeless repentance, the heart still finds in its innermost sanctuary the memory which, death-doomed and petrified, has yet been faithfully guarded and cherished unscathed until, ransomed by tears, it consents to live once more. The play has its meaning and moral just as a symphony may have, neither more nor less. It would be absurd to seek for a psychological

reason for Hermione's prolonged concealment. She reappears at the end because her presence is required, as the final chord is needed in music or the completing arabesque in a drawing.

Among Shakespeare's additions in the first part of the play we find the characters of the noble and resolute Paulina and her weakly good-natured husband. Paulina, who has been overlooked by both Mrs. Jameson and Heine in their descriptions of Shakespeare's feminine characters, is one of the most admirable and original figures he has put upon the stage. She has more courage than ten men, and possesses that natural eloquence and power of pathos which determined honesty and sound common sense can bestow upon a woman. She would go through fire and water for the queen whom she loves and trusts. She is untouched by sentimentality; there is as little of the erotic as there is of repugnance in her attitude towards her husband. Her treatment of the king's jealous frenzy reminds us of Emilia in *Othello*, but the resemblance ends there. In Paulina there is a vein of that rare metal which we only find in excellent women of this not essentially feminine type. We meet it again in the nineteenth century in the character of Christiana Oehlenschläger as we see it in Hauch's beautiful commemorative poem.

The rustic fête in the second part of the play, with the conversations between Florizel and Perdita, is entirely Shakespeare's work; above all is the diverting figure of Autolycus his own peculiar property.

In Greene's tale the king falls violently in love with his daughter when she is restored to him a grown woman, and he kills himself in despair when she is wedded to her lover. Shakespeare rejected this stupid and ugly feature; his ending is all pure harmony.

Here, as in *Cymbeline*, we see the poet compelled by the nature of his theme to dwell upon the disastrous effects of jealousy. This is the third time he treats of such suspicions driving to madness. Othello was the first great example, then Posthumus, and now Leontes.

The case of Leontes is so far unique that no one has suggested causes of jealousy, nor slandered Hermione to him. His own coarse and foolish imaginings alone are to blame. This variation of the vice was evidently intended to darken the background against which womanly high-mindedness and blamelessness were to shine forth.

Mrs. Jameson has charmingly said that Hermione combines such rare virtues as "dignity without pride, love without passion, and tenderness without weakness." As queen, wife, and mother, there is a majestic lovableness about her, a grand and gracious simplicity, a natural self-control, the proverb, "Still waters run deep," being eminently applicable to her. Her gentle dignity contrasts well with Paulina's enthusiastic intrepidity, and her noble reticence with Paulina's free outspokenness. Her attitude and language during the trial scene are superb, far outshining Queen Katherine's on a similar occasion. Her nature, the ideal Englishwoman's nature, all meekness and submissiveness, rises in dignified protest. She is brief in her self-defence; life has no value for her since she has lost her husband's love, since her little son has been removed from her as though she were plague-stricken, and her new-born daughter "from her breast, the innocent milk in its most innocent mouth, haled out to murder." Her only desire is to vindicate her honour, yet the first words of this cruelly accused and shamefully treated woman are full of pity for the remorse which Leontes will some day suffer. Her language is that of innocent fortitude. When about to be taken to prison she says:

> "There's some ill planet reigns:
> I must be patient till the heavens look
> With an aspect more favourable. Good my lords,
> I am not prone to weeping, as our sex
> Commonly are; the want of which vain dew
> Perchance shall dry your pities: but I have
> That honourable grief lodged here which burns
> Worse than tears drown."

She bids her women not weep until she has deserved imprisonment; then indeed their tears will have cause to flow.

In the second half of the *Winter's Tale* we are surrounded by a fresh and charming country, and shown a picture of rustic happiness and well-being. No one was less influenced by the sentimental vagaries of the fantastic pastorals of the day than Shakespeare. He had drawn in Corin and Phebe, in *As You Like It*, an extremely natural, and therefore not particularly poetical, shepherd and shepherdess; and the herdsmen in the *Winter's Tale* are no beautiful languishing souls. They do not write sonnets and madrigals, but drink ale and eat pies and

dance. The hostess serves her guests with a face that is "o' fire with labour and the thing she took to quench it." The clowns' heads are full of the prices of wool; they have no thought for roses and nightingales, and their simplicity is rather comical than touching. They are more than overmatched by the light-fingered Autolycus, who educates them by means of ballads, and eases them of their purses at the same time. He is a Jack-of-all-trades, has travelled the country with a monkey, been a process-server, bailiff, and servant to Prince Florizel; he has gone about with a puppet-show playing the Prodigal Son; finally, he marries a tinker's wife and settles down as a confirmed rogue. He is the clown of the piece—roguish, genial, witty, and always master of the situation. In spite of the fact that Shakespeare seized every opportunity to flout the lower classes, that he always gave a satirical and repellent picture of them as a mass, yet their natural wit, good sense, and kind-heartedness are always portrayed in his clowns with a sympathetic touch. Before his time, the buffoon was never an inherent part of the play; he came on and danced his jig without any connection with the plot, and was, in fact, merely intended to amuse the uneducated portion of the audience and make them laugh. Shakespeare was the first to incorporate him into the plot, and to endow him, not merely with the jester's wit, but with the higher faculties and feelings of the Fool in *Lear*, or the gay humour of the vagabond pedlar, Autolycus.

The clown in the *Winter's Tale* is the drollest and sharpest of knaves, and is employed to unravel the knot in the story. He it is who transports the old shepherd and his son from Bohemia to the court of King Leontes in Sicily.

The ludicrous features of rustic society, however, are quite overpowered by the kind-heartedness which stamps every word coming from the lips of these worthy country folk, and prepares us for the appearance of Perdita in their midst.

She has been adopted out of compassion, and, with her gold, proves a source of prosperity to her adoptive parents. Thus she grows up without feeling the pressure of poverty or servitude. She wins the prince's heart by the beauty of her youth, and when we first see her she is attired in all her splendour as queen of a rural festival. Modest and charming as she is, she shows the courage of a true princess in face of the difficulties and hardships she must encounter for the sake of her love.

She is one of Shakespeare's cherished children, and he has endowed her with his favourite trait—a distaste for anything artificial or unnatural. Not even to improve the flowers in her garden will she employ the art of special means of cultivation. She will not have the rich blooms of "carnations and streaked gillyflowers" there; they do not thrive and she will not plant them. When Polixenes asks why she disdains them, she replies (Act iv. sc. 3):

> "For I have heard it said
> There is an art which in their piedness shares
> With great creating nature."

To which Polixenes makes the profound response:

> "Say there be;
> Yet nature is made better by no mean,
> But nature makes that mean: so over that art
> Which you say adds to nature is an art
> That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry
> A gentler scion to the wildest stock,
> And make conceive a bark of baser kind
> By bud of nobler race; this is an art
> Which does mend nature,—change it rather; but
> The art itself is nature."

These are the most profound and subtle words that could well be spoken on the subject of the relations between nature and culture; the clearest repudiation of that gospel of naturalism against which the figure of Caliban and the ridicule cast upon Gonzalo's Utopia in *The Tempest* are protests. Perdita herself is one of those chosen flowers which are the product of that true culture which preserves and ennobles nature.

They are also words of genuine wisdom on the relative positions of nature and art. Shakespeare's art was that of nature itself, and in this short speech we possess his æsthetic confession of faith.

His ideal was a poetry which strayed neither in matter nor manner from what Hamlet calls "the modesty of nature." Although he did not wholly succeed in escaping its infection, Shakespeare invariably pursued the artificial taste of the times with gibes. From the days when he made merry at the expense of Euphuisms in *Love's Labour's Lost* and Falstaff, until now, when

he puts such affectedly poetical language in the mouths of his courtiers in the *Winter's Tale*, he has always ridiculed it vigorously.

In the first scene of the play Camillo says in praise of Mamillius:

"They that went on crutches before he was born desire still their life to see him a man.

Whereupon Archidamus sarcastically inquires:

"Would they else be content to die?"

and Camillo is forced to laughingly confess:

"Yes, if there were no other excuse why they should desire to live."

Still more absurd is the style in which the Third Gentleman describes, in the last scene of the play, the meeting between the king and his long-lost daughter and the aspect of the spectators. He says of Paulina:

"She had one eye declined for the loss of her husband, another elevated that the oracle was fulfilled.[1]

This comical diction reaches a climax in the following expressions:

"One of the prettiest touches of all, and that *which angled for mine eyes, caught water though not the fish*, was when at the relation of the queen's death, with the manner how she came to't, bravely confessed and lamented by the king, how attentiveness wounded his daughter; till, from one sign of dolour to another, she did, with an 'Alas,' I would fain say, *bleed tears*, for I am sure my heart wept blood. Who was most marble there changed colour; some swooned, all sorrowed: if all the world could have seen 't *the woe had been universal.*"

That Shakespeare's æsthetic sense did not sanction such expressions as these of the Third Gentleman scarcely needs stating. Perdita's language is that of nature itself. So great is her dislike of

[1] Julius Lange positively asserts that these expressions are not to be taken as an intentional jest on the part of Shakespeare, but are to be regarded as part of his style ("said in sober earnest," to quote his own words), and he makes them the pretext of an attack upon the "then, as now, idolised Shakespeare—in whose works, after all, we find more high-sounding and highly-coloured words than any meaning or real understanding of life." (Tilskueren, 1895, p. 699.)

artificiality, that she will not even plant gardener's flowers in her garden, saying:

> "No more than were I painted I would wish
> This youth should say 'twere well, and only therefore
> Desire to breed by me."

Nowhere is Shakespeare's knowledge of nature more charmingly displayed than in her speeches. It is not only the poetic expression that is so wonderful in Perdita's distribution of flowers; it is the intimacy shown with their habits. She says (Act iv. sc. 3):

> "Hot lavender, mints, savory, marjoram;
> The marigold, that goes to bed wi' the sun
> And with him rises weeping."

How well she knows that in England the daffodils bloom as early as February and March, while the swallow does not come till April:

> "—— O Proserpina,
> For the flowers now that, frighted, thou lett'st fall
> From Dis's waggon! daffodils,
> That come before the swallow dares, and take
> The winds of March with beauty; violets dim,
> But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes
> Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroses,
> That die unmarried, ere they can behold
> Bright Phœbus in his strength—a malady
> Most incident to maids; bold oxlips and
> The crown imperial; lilies of all kinds,
> The flower-de-luce being one! Oh, these I lack
> To make you garlands of, and my sweet friend,
> To strew him o'er and o'er!
> *Florizel.* What, like a corse?
> *Perdita.* No, like a bank for love to lie and play on:
> Not like a corse; or if, not to be buried,
> But quick and in mine arms." . . .

Florizel's answer describes her with a lover's eloquence:

> "What you do
> Still betters what is done. When you speak, sweet,
> I'd have you do it ever: when you sing,

I'd have you buy and sell so, so give alms,
Pray so, and, for the ordering your affairs,
To sing them too." . . .

Her charm is equalled by her pride and resolution. When the king threatens to have her "beauty scratched with briars" if she dares retain her hold upon his son, although she believes all is lost, she says:

"I was not much afraid; for once or twice
I was about to speak and tell him plainly,
The self-same sun that shines upon his court
Hides not his visage from our cottage, but
Looks on alike." . . .

The delineation of the love between Florizel and Perdita is marked by certain features not to be found in Shakespeare's youthful works, but which reappear with Ferdinand and Miranda in *The Tempest.* There is a certain remoteness from the world about it, a tenderness for those who are still yearning and hoping for happiness and a renunciation of any expectation as far as himself is concerned. He stands outside and beyond it all now. In the old days the poet stood on a level, as it were, with the love he was portraying; now he looks upon it from above with a fatherly eye.

As in *Cymbeline,* the court is here placed in contrast with idyllic life, and shown as the abode of cruelty, stupidity, and vice. Even the better of the two kings, Polixenes, is rough and harsh, and Leontes, whom we are not to look upon as criminal, but only as misled by his miserable suspicions, offers a true picture of the princely attitude and princely behaviour of the time of the Renaissance, during the sixteenth century in Italy and about a century later in England. It was with good reason that Belarius said in *Cymbeline* (Act iii. sc. 3):

"And we will fear no poison, which attends
In place of greater state."

We see that the thoughts of the king immediately turn to poison when he believes that his wife has deceived him, and we also see that the courtier in whom he confides has all the means ready to hand (Act i. sc. 2):

"And thou . . .
. . . might'st bespice a cup,

To give mine enemy a lasting wink;
Which draught to me were cordial.
Camillo. Sir, my lord,
I could do this, and that with no rash potion,
But with a lingering dram that should not work
Maliciously like poison."

When, to escape committing this crime, Camillo takes flight with Polixenes, and the king has to be content with wreaking his vengeance on the hapless Hermione and her infant, he returns again and again to the thought of having them burned:

"Say that she were gone,
Given to the fire, a moiety of my rest
Might come to me again."

Then the command with regard to the child:

"Hence with it, and, together with the dam,
Commit them to the fire!" (Act ii. sc. 3).

Paulina shall share their fate for daring to oppose him:

"I'll ha' thee burnt!"

When she is gone, he repeats his order for the burning of the infant:

"Take it hence
And see it instantly consumed with fire. . . .
. . . If thou refuse,
And wilt encounter with my wrath, say so;
The bastard brains with these my proper hands
Shall I dash out. Go, take it to the fire!"

We can see that Shakespeare had no intention of allowing the drama to become mawkish by giving too free scope to the humours of a pastoral play.

The resemblance between the sufferings of the infant Perdita, put ashore on the coast of Bohemia during a tempest, and those of the infant Marina, born during a storm at sea, is accentuated by lines which markedly recall a well-known passage in *Pericles*. In the *Winter's Tale* we have (Act iii. sc. 3):

"Thou'rt like to have
A lullaby too rough: I never saw
The heavens so dim by day. A savage clamour!"[1]

The impression designedly produced upon the audience, that all this is not serious earnest, enables Shakespeare to approach more nearly to tragic dissonance than would otherwise be permissible in a work of this kind. The atmosphere of fairy tale, so skilfully breathed here and there throughout the play, carries with it a certain playfulness of expression which gives a touch of raillery to incidents which would otherwise be horrible. Playfulness it is, and we once more obtain a glimpse of this quality which has so long deserted Shakespeare. It would be difficult to find a more roguish bit of drollery than the old shepherd's monologue on finding the child (Act iii. sc. 3):

"A pretty one; a very pretty one: sure, some 'scape: though I am not bookish, yet I can read waiting-gentlewoman in the 'scape. This has been some stair-work, some trunk-work, some behind-door-work: they were warmer that got this than the poor thing is here."

The same tone is preserved in the young shepherd's account of how he saw Antigonus torn to pieces by a bear. Impossible to feel horror-stricken or solemn over this:

"And then for the land-service, to see how the bear tore out his shoulder-bone; how he cried to me for help, and said his name was Antigonus, a nobleman. But to make an end of the ship, to see how the sea flap-dragoned it; but first how the poor souls roared, and the sea mocked them; and how the poor gentleman roared, and the bear mocked him, both roaring louder than sea or weather."

It does not seem very likely that the unfortunate man's chief anxiety while the bear was tearing him to pieces would be to inform the shepherd of his name and rank. He forgot to add his age, although, through a slip on Shakespeare's part, the old shepherd knows without being told that Antigonus was aged.

Shakespeare did not concentrate his whole strength on this play either. He took no great pains to reduce his scattered

[1] In *Pericles:*

"For thou'rt the rudliest welcome to this world
That e'er was prince's child."

materials to order, and, as if in defiance of those classically cultivated people who demanded unity of time and place, he allowed sixteen years to elapse between two acts, leaving us on the voyage between Sicily and Bohemia, between reality and wonderland. In other words, he has freely improvised on his instrument upon a given poetic theme; he has painted purely decoratively, content with a general harmony of colour and unity of tone, without giving much thought to any ultimate meaning.

XX

THE TEMPEST—WRITTEN FOR THE PRINCESS ELIZABETH'S WEDDING

It is a different matter with that rich, fantastic wonder-poem, *The Tempest*, on which Shakespeare concentrated for the last time all the powers of his mind. Everything here is ordered and concise, and so inspired with thought that we seem to be standing face to face with the poet's idea. In spite of all its boldness of imagination, the dramatic order and condensation are such that the whole complies with the severest rules of Aristotle, the action of the entire play occupying in reality only three hours.

Owing to a notice by the Master of the Revels concerning a performance of the play at Whitehall in 1611, the date 1610–11 was long accepted as the year of its production. This memorandum is, however, a forgery, and the sole bit of reliable information we possess of *The Tempest*, before its appearance in the Folio edition of 1613, is a notice in Vertue's Manuscripts of a performance at court in February 1613, as one of the festivities celebrating the Princess Elizabeth's wedding. We can prove that this was its first performance and that it was written expressly for the occasion.

The Princess Elizabeth had been educated at Combe Abbey, far from the impure atmosphere of the court, under the care of Lord and Lady Harrington, an honourable and right-minded couple. When returned to her parents at the age of fifteen, she was distinguished by a charm and dignity beyond her years, and soon became the special favourite of her brother Henry, then seventeen years of age. Claimants for her hand were not long in appearing. The Prince of Piedmont was among the first, but the Pope would not consent to a marriage between a Catholic potentate and a Protestant princess. The next wooer was no less a person than Gustavus Adolphus, and his suit was rejected

because James refused to bestow his daughter upon the enemy of his friend and brother-in-law, Christian IV. of Denmark. As early as December 1611 negotiations were entered upon on behalf of Prince Frederick V., who had just succeeded his father as Elector of the Palatinate. There was much to be said in favour of an alliance with a son of the man who had stood at the head of the Protestant League in Germany, and in May 1612 a preliminary contract of betrothal was signed. In the August of the same year an ambassador from the young Elector came to England. Meanwhile the first suitor, strongly supported by the Queen's Catholic sympathies, had reappeared. The King of Spain had also made some overtures, but they had fallen through on account of their implying the conversion of the Princess to the Catholic faith. It was the Elector Frederick, therefore, who was finally victorious in the contest, and matters were soon so far settled that he could set out on his journey to England. He was very popular there by reason of his Protestantism, and he arrived at Gravesend amid general rejoicing. He sailed up to Whitehall on the 22nd of October, and was enthusiastically greeted by the crowd. King James received him warmly, and presented him with a ring worth eighteen hundred pounds. He was ardently supported by the young Prince of Wales, who announced his intention of following his sister on her wedding-tour to Germany, where it was his secret purpose to look for a bride for himself, regardless of political intrigue.

The Elector Palatine was a remarkably handsome and prepossessing young man. Born on the 16th of August 1596, he was at this time just sixteen years of age, and nothing in his conduct suggested the unmanly and contemptible character he displayed eight years later, when he, as King of Bohemia, lost the battle of Prague through a drunken revel. The contemporary English accounts of him abound with his praise. He made an excellent impression everywhere, and we read of his dignified and princely behaviour in a letter from John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, dated 22nd October 1612: "He hath a train of very sober and well-fashioned gentlemen, his whole number is not above 170, servants and all, being limited by the King not to exceed." The condition of the exchequer would not permit of any unnecessary extravagance, and in less than a month after the wedding the whole retinue appointed to attend

on the Prince during his stay in England was dismissed—a slight which the young Princess took very much to heart.

The much beloved Prince Henry was far from well at the time of his future brother-in-law's arrival in London. He had injured himself by violent bodily exercise during the unusually hot summer, and had ruined his digestion by eating great quantities of fruit. We now know that the illness by which he was attacked was typhus fever, and it appears that not many days after he was convalescent he incurred a severe relapse by playing tennis in the cold open air with no more clothing on the upper part of his body than a shirt.

High-minded, enlightened, and honourable as he was, Prince Henry was the idol and hope of the English nation. Queen Anne had taken the Prince, while he was yet a boy, to visit Raleigh at the Tower, soon after the illustrious prisoner had been forced to abandon those hopes of the Admiralship of the Danish fleet which he had based on the visit of Christian the Fourth to England. Prince Henry had been intimate with Raleigh since 1610, and is reported to have said, "No man but my father would have kept such a bird in a cage!" He had, with great difficulty, obtained from the King a promise that Raleigh should be released at Christmas 1612—a promise which was never kept.

On the morning of the 6th of November the Prince's condition was declared hopeless. The Queen sent to the Tower for a bottle of Raleigh's famous cordial, which she believed to have once saved her own life, and in which Raleigh himself placed the greatest faith. He despatched it with a message that it would save the Prince's life, unless he were dying of poison. It only availed to ease his death struggles, however, and, barely nineteen years of age, he died before the day was out.

Never before in the history of England had such hopes been fixed and such affection lavished on an heir-apparent, and we can realise how great would be the grief of the entire nation for his loss. According to the manner of the times, it was generally supposed that he had been poisoned. John Chamberlain, writing to Sir Dudley Carleton, says that grave doubts were entertained, but adds that no traces of poison were found when the body was opened on the second day. The editor of these letters, however (author of the *Memoirs of Sophia Dorothea*), remarks: "There

is nothing conclusive in this; for, in the first place, there were poisons which left no trace of their presence; and, in the next, if the effects of poisoning had been visible, the physicians would have been afraid to say so. More than one writer has ventured to assert that the atrocious crime was perpetrated with the connivance of the king, whose notorious jealousy of the popular young prince at this period, and foolish fondness for his brother Charles, induced a wretch well known to have been guilty of similar practices—the King's favourite, Viscount Rochester—to cause the prince to be secretly put out of the way." It was hoped by all who objected to the marriage of the Princess to the German Elector that Prince Henry's death would stand in the way of the wedding, for it could hardly be celebrated at a time of such deep mourning. The Elector, however, had come over to England on purpose to be married, and it was not possible to delay the ceremony long. The final marriage contract was signed by the King on the 17th of November, and the formal betrothal took place on the 27th of the same month. The wedding was postponed, but only until February. Sir Thomas Lake writes on the 6th of January that mourning is given up, and the wedding festivities are arranged.

The bride of seventeen was solemnly united to the bridegroom of sixteen to the general gratification of the court, on the 14th of February, in the presence of many spectators. On the 18th of the same month John Chamberlain writes to Mrs. Carleton: "The bridegroom and bride were both in a suit of cloth of silver, richly embroidered with silver, her train carried up by thirteen young ladies, or lord's daughters at least, besides five or six more that could not come near it. These were all in the same livery with the bride, though not so rich. The bride was married in her hair, that hung down long, with an exceeding rich coronet on her head, which the King valued at a million of crowns."

The bridegroom, with the King and Prince Charles, took part in a tournament of the wedding, and earned great applause in the evening by a display of his splendid horsemanship (*Court and Times of James the First*). In Wilson's *Contemporary History* (p. 64) we read of the bride: "Her vestments were white, the emblem of Innocency, her hair dishevel'd, hanging down her back at length, an ornament of Virginity; a crown of pure gold upon her head, the cognizance of Majesty, being all beset with

precious gems, shining liking a constellation, her train supported by twelve young ladies in white garments, so adorned with jewels that her passage looked like a milky way."

Among the various plays chosen for performance at court during these wedding festivities was *The Tempest*, and we shall see that it was written expressly for the occasion.

It is hardly necessary to confute Hunter's theory, argued at great length, that the play dates from 1596. One fact alone will sufficiently prove its absurdity, namely, that use is made in the play of a passage from Florio's translation of Montaigne, which was not published until 1603. Nor is there any foundation for Karl Elze's opinion (also lengthily set forth) that *The Tempest* was written by 1604. The metre shows that it belongs to Shakespeare's latest period. It has a proportion of 33 in the 100 of eleven-syllabled lines, whereas *Antony and Cleopatra*, written long after 1604, has but 25, and *As You Like It*, of the year 1600, only 12 in the 100.

We have another fragment of internal evidence against the play having been written before 1610. In May 1609 Sir George Somer's fleet was scattered by a storm in mid-ocean while on its way to Virginia. The admiral's ship, driven out of its course, was blown by the gale unto the Bermudas. After all hope had been abandoned, the vessel was saved by being stranded between two rocks in just such a bay as that to which Ariel guides the king's ship in *The Tempest*. A little book was written on the subject of this shipwreck, and the adventures connected with it, by Sylvester Jourdan, and was published in 1610 under the title, "Discovery of the Bermudas, otherwise called, The Isle of Devils." The storm and the peril of the admiral's ship are described; the vessel had sprung a leak, and the sailors were falling asleep at the pumps out of sheer exhaustion when she grounded. They found the island (hitherto regarded as enchanted) uninhabited, the air mild, and the soil remarkably fertile.

Shakespeare borrowed several details from this book, the name of Bermoothes, mentioned by Ariel in the first act, for instance; and his only reason for not following the narrative in detail was his desire to lay the scene in an island of the Mediterranean.

The play, then, was written for the royal wedding in 1613. This date was first surmised by Tieck, and later declared probable by Johan Meissner, being finally confirmed by Richard Garnett in

the *Universal Review* of 1889. The latter maintains and proves that *The Tempest* was written for a private audience on the occasion of a wedding; that the nature of the audience and the identity of the wedding are determined by unmistakable references to the personality of the bridegroom, to the early death of Prince Henry, and to the qualities which King James prided himself on possessing, and for which he loved to be praised. Over and above all this, there is internal evidence for the year 1613, and none for any other date.

The play is much shorter than the generality of Shakespeare's dramas, there being only 2000 lines in *The Tempest* against the average 3000. It was not permitted to take up too much of the King's time nor of that of his guests; moreover, the play had to be written and learned and put on the stage all within the course of, at most, a few months. Thus there was every inducement to make it short.

Not being written for performance in an ordinary theatre, it was desirable to have as few changes of scene as possible, and in this respect *The Tempest* is unique among Shakespeare's plays. After the opening scene on the deck of the ship, no change of scenery whatever is necessary, although the action transpires on different parts of the island. The occasion of the play made it equally desirable to avoid change of costume, and of this there is actually none, except where Prospero attires himself in ducal robes at the close of the play, and even this he effects on the stage with the assistance of Ariel. We have already referred to the compression of the play, which, instead of extending, as is usual with Shakespeare, over a long period, or even (as in *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*) over a whole lifetime, merely occupies three hours, not much longer than was required for the performance of the play.

In spite of its brevity, two masques, of the kind generally represented before royalty on such occasions, are introduced into the play.

The pantomime and ballet, with its transformations, are much more elaborate than would have been necessary if the scene was only there for its own sake. "Enter several strange Shapes, bringing in a banquet; they dance about it with gentle actions of salutation; and inviting the king, &c., to eat, they depart. Thunder and lightning. Enter Ariel, like a harpy; claps his wings upon the table, and with a quaint device the banquet

vanishes." King James had, as we know, a fancy for all manner of stage machinery, and Inigo Jones contrived quantities of it for use at court festivities.

Still more suggestive is the great wedding masque, which, with its mythological figures, Juno, Ceres, and Iris, occupies nearly the whole of the fourth act. If it were not that *The Tempest* was written for a bridal performance, this masque would be condemned, so extraneous is it to the plot, as a later interpolation, and as such, indeed, it was considered by Karl Elze. Without it, however, the fourth act dwindles to nothing, and the ballet is obviously required to give it its proper length. Moreover, masque and play are inseparably connected by the famous lines, "and like the baseless fabric of this vision," &c. It has been attributed, without sufficient reason, to Beaumont; but even supposing him to have composed it, it must have been planned by the author of the play and written to his order, and it affords unmistakable proof that *The Tempest* was composed as an occasional play for the diversion of princes and courtiers. The audience must have been in possession of circumstances justifying the introduction of the masque, and those circumstances could not be anything but a wedding. We may now assert with absolute certainty that *The Tempest* was performed on the occasion of the Princess Elizabeth's wedding. They would not revive an old play, originally written for the stage, for such a purpose, still less would they use one which had been composed for a previous wedding. Shakespeare would never allow anything unsuitable to be performed; moreover, at no former marriage would such a play have been appropriate. The fact that it was one of the king's musicians who composed the music for Ariel's songs, "Full fathom five" in the first act, and "Where the bee sucks" in the last, renders it still more probable that this of the court was its first performance. Everything indicates a royal wedding.

We find many flattering allusions in this play to King James, who could not possibly be neglected on such an occasion as that of his daughter's bridal. When Prospero, explaining his position to his daughter (Act i. sc. 2), tells how he was foremost among all the dukes for dignity and knowledge of the liberal arts, his special study, and how, absorbed in secret studies, he grew a stranger to his state, his speech conveys that interpretation of James's position and character which he himself favoured, and implies, at the

same time, that the possession of these qualities was the cause of his unpopularity. Possibly there was a touch of well-concealed irony in all this. Garnett, indeed, finds an intentional dramatic satire in the crustiness and self-sufficiency of the character, proving that even the development of the highest human qualities is attended by drawbacks. But this is carrying the parallel between the characteristics of Prospero and James too far. Garnett can truly say, however, that just such a prince as Prospero, wise, humane, peace-loving, pursuing distant aims which none but he could realise or fathom; independent of counsellors and more than a match for his enemies in sagacity, holding himself in reserve until the decisive moment and then taking effective action, a devoted student of every lawful science but a sworn foe to the black art, did James imagine himself to be, and as such did he love to be represented.

We have seen with what mingled feelings the King and court would prepare for the Princess's wedding. The grief for Prince Henry's death was still so fresh that all rejoicing must be overshadowed by it. A noisy joyous play would have been out of place, while, upon the other hand, it would not do to destroy all festive feeling by directly recalling the loss the royal family and the nation had so lately sustained. Shakespeare performed this difficult task with admirable tact and good feeling. He alluded to the death of the Prince, but in such a manner that grief was lost in joy. Until the last act of the play the youthful Prince Ferdinand is believed by his father and the courtiers to be dead, and frequent expression is given to their sorrow over their supposed loss. The Prince is not the son of Prospero, but of Alonso, and the sonless Duke finds a son in Ferdinand, as James found one in the Elector Palatine.

The fact that these guarded allusions to Prince Henry's death are found throughout the play prove that it must have been written after the 6th of November, and, since it was evidently performed before the wedding, which was celebrated on the 14th of February, we may see how little time was needed by Shakespeare in which to produce a work actually brimming over with genius, and how far he was from being enfeebled or exhausted when, in this play, he bade farewell for ever to his art and his position in London.

The entire drama is permeated by the atmosphere of that age of discovery and struggling colonists. It has been admirably shown by Watkins Lloyd that all the topics and problems it

deals with correspond to the colonisation of Virginia—the marvels brought to light by the discovery of new countries and new races; by the wonderful falsehoods, and still more wonderful truths, of travellers concerning natural phenomena and the superstitions arising from them. Sea perils and shipwreck, the power that lies in such calamities to provoke remorse for crimes committed; the quarrels and mutinies of colonists, the struggles of their leaders to preserve their authority; theories on the civilisation and government of new countries, the reappearance of old world vices on a new soil, the contrast between the reasoning powers of man and those of the savage; and lastly, all the demands made upon the activity, promptitude, and energy of the conquerors.

The date of the first Virginian settlement was May 1607, and it then consisted of 107 colonists. The Virginia Company was not founded until 1609 and very little was known about it before 1610. Not before 1612 could they write home, "Our colony is now seven hundred strong." These circumstances all seem to point to 1612–13 as the period during which *The Tempest* was produced.

XXI

SOURCES OF THE TEMPEST

WE possess no knowledge of any one particular source from which *The Tempest* might have been drawn, but it seems probable that Shakespeare constructed his drama upon some already existing foundation. A childishly old-fashioned play by Jacob Ayrer, *Comedia von der schönen Sidea*, seems to have been founded upon a variant of the story used by Shakespeare.[1] Ayrer died in 1605, and his work, therefore, cannot have owed anything to that of the great dramatist. The similarity between the two plays is confined to the relations between Prospero and Alonso, and Ferdinand and Miranda. In the German play we have a banished sovereign, his daughter, and a captive prince, who is compelled to atone for his audacity in making love to the daughter by carrying and cutting firewood. He promises his beloved she shall be queen, and attempting to draw his sword upon his father-in-law, is rendered powerless by magic. There is no real resemblance between the dramas. It is, of course, possible that Dowland, or some other English actor, might have introduced the *Sidea* from Germany, but Shakespeare did not know German, and in any case the play was too poor a one to interest him. Moreover, since we know that Ayrer did occasionally copy English works, we may safely conclude that both dramatists were indebted to some earlier English source. There is nothing specially original about the above incidents. In Greene's *Friar Bacon*, four men make fruitless efforts to draw swords held in their scabbards by magic, and *The Tempest* would naturally possess traits in common with other plays representing sorcery upon the stage. In Marlowe's drama, *Dr. Faustus*, for instance, the hero punishes his would-be murderers by making them wallow in filth (*Faustus*, Act iv. sc. 2), just as Prospero drives

[1] Jacob Ayrer: *Opera Theatricum.* Nurnburg, 1618. L. Tieck: *Deutsches Theater*, i. p. 323. Albert Cohn: *Shakespeare in Germany*, ii. pp. 1–75.

Caliban, Trinculo, and Stephano into the marsh and leaves them there up to their chins in mire (*Tempest*, Act iv.).

It is a most arbitrary and unreasonable supposition of Meissner's that Shakespeare borrowed his wedding masque from the one performed at Prince Henry's christening, in which also Juno, Ceres, and Iris appear. Shakespeare was never so lacking in inventive power that he needed to unearth a description of an old play which had been acted before King James at Stirling Castle some nineteen years previously. We know that the masque itself was not yet in print.

It was an early and correct observation that various minor details of *The Tempest* were taken from different books of travel. Shakespeare found the name of Setebos, and, possibly, the first idea of Caliban himself, in an account of Magellan's voyage to the south pole in Eden's *Historye of Travaile in East and West Indies* (1577). From Raleigh's *Discovery of the large, rich, and bewtiful Empire of Guiana* (1596) he took the fable of the men whose heads stood upon their breasts. Raleigh writes that, though this may be an invention, he is inclined to believe it true, because every child in the provinces of Arromai and Canuri maintains that their mouths were in the middle of their breasts.[1] (See Gonzalo's speech in *The Tempest*, Act iii. sc. 2.)

It was Hunter who first suggested that Shakespeare might have taken some hints from Ariosto. It is possible that he had in mind some stanzas from the 43rd canto of *Orlando Furioso*. The 15th and 14th contain a faint foreshadowing, as it were, of Prospero and Miranda, and the 187th stanza alludes to the power of witchcraft to raise storms and calm seas again. The *Orlando* had been translated into English by Harrington, but, as we have already observed, Shakespeare was fully qualified to read it in the original. Too much, however, has already been made of these trivial, nay, utterly insignificant coincidences.[2]

[1] "Or that there were such men
Whose heads stood in their breasts? which now we find,
Each putter-out of five for one will bring us
Good warrant of."

[2] We read of the old man:

"Nella nostra cittade era un uom saggio
Di tutte l' arti oltre ogni creder dotto."

Of his arrangements for his daughter, due to the bad character of his wife, we are told:

It is far more remarkable that the famous and beautiful passage (Act iv.) proclaiming the transitoriness of all earthly things—a passage which seems to be a mournful epitome of the philosophy of Shakespeare's last years of productiveness—may be an easy adaptation of an inferior and quite unknown poet of his day. When the spirit play conjured up by Prospero has vanished he says:

"These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air,
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep."

In Count Stirling's tragedy of *Darius*, published in London, 1604, the following verses occur:

"Let Greatness of her glassy scepters vaunt,
Not scepters, no, but reeds, soon bruis'd, soon broken;
And let this worldly pomp our wits enchant,
All fades, and scarcely leaves behind a token.
Those golden palaces, those gorgeous halls,
With furniture superfluously fair,
Those stately courts, those sky-encount'ring walls,
Evanish all like vapours in the air."

History could scarcely afford a more striking proof that in art the style is all, subject and meaning being of comparatively

"Fuor del commercio popolo la invola,
Ed ove piu solingo il luogo vede,
Questo amplo e bel palagio e ricco tanto
Fece fare a demonj per incanto."

Of the storm, which, by the way, is not raised by the said old man, but by hermit, we are merely told:

"E facea alcuno effetto soprumano
. . . . . .
Fermare il vento ad un segno di croce
E far tranquillo il mar quando è più atroce."

small importance. Stirling's verses are by no means bad, nor even poor, and their decidedly pleasing rhymes express, in very similar words, exactly the same idea we find in Shakespeare's lines, and were, moreover, their precursors. Nevertheless, both they and the name of their author would be utterly forgotten long since if Shakespeare had not, by a marvellous touch or two, transformed them into a few lines of blank verse which will hold their own in the memory of man as long as the English language lasts.

As Meissner[1] pointed out, Shakespeare was indebted to Frampton's translation of Marco Polo (1579) for one or two suggestive hints. For example, we read in Frampton of the desert of Lob in Asia: "You shall heare in the ayre, the sound of *Tabers and other instruments*, to putte the travellers in feare, and to make them lose their way, and to depart their company and loose themselves: and by that meanes many doe die, being deceived so, by evill spirits, that make these soundes, and also doe call diverse of the travellers *by their names*." Compare this with Caliban's words in *The Tempest* (Act iii. sc. 2):

> "The isle is full of noises,
> Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
> Sometimes a *thousand twangling instruments*
> Will hum about mine ears, and sometimes voices."

And Trinculo's subsequent jesting remark, which evidently refers to the accompaniment of a clown's morris dance: "I would I could see this *tabourer;* he lays it on." Compare also Alonso's lament (Act iii. sc. 3):

> "Oh, it is monstrous, monstrous!
> Methought the billows spoke and told me of it;
> The winds did sing it to me, and the thunder,
> That deep and dreadful organ-pipe, pronounced
> *The name of Prospero:* it did bass my trespass."

Shakespeare may have found the first suggestions of Caliban and Ariel in Greene's *Friar Bacon*. In the ninth scene of this play, two necromancers, Bungay and Vandermast, dispute as to which possess the greater power, the pyromantic (fire) spirits or

[1] Johan Meissner: *Untersuchungen über Shakespeare's Sturm.*

the geomantic (earth) spirits. The fire spirits, says Bungay, are mere transparent shadows that float past us like heralds, while the spirits of earth are strong enough to burst rocks asunder. Vandermast maintains that earth spirits are dull, as befits their place of abode. They are coarse and earthly, less intelligent than other spirits, and thus it is they are at the service of jugglers, witches, and common sorcerers. But the fine spirits are mighty and swift, their power is far-reaching.

A more direct suggestion of Ariel's charming ways was probably found by Shakespeare at the close of the already mentioned *Faithful Shepherdess*, written by his young friend Fletcher. In it the satyr offers his services to the beautiful Corin in terms which recall Ariel's speech to Prospero (Act i. sc. 2):

> "All hail, great master! grave sir, hail! I come
> To answer thy best pleasure; be't to fly,
> To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride
> On the curled clouds, to thy strong bidding task
> Ariel and all his quality."

Fletcher's satyr makes the same offer:

> "Tell me, sweetest,
> What new service now is meetest
> For a satyr? Shall I stray
> In the middle air, and stay
> The sailing rack, or nimbly take
> Hold by the moon, and gently make
> Suit to the pale queen of night
> For a beam to give thee light?
> Shall I dive into the sea,
> And bring thee coral, making way
> Through the rising waves that fall
> In snowy fleeces?" &c.

But a much more striking example of Shakespeare's taste and talent for adaptation is presented by Prospero's farewell speech to the elves (Act v. sc. 1), "Ye elves of hills, brooks," &c. Warburton was the first to draw attention to the fact that this speech, in which Shakespeare bids farewell to his art, and tells, through the medium of Prospero's marvellous eloquence, of all that he has accomplished, was founded upon the great incanta-

tion in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (vii. 197–219), where, after the conquest of the golden fleece, Medea, at Jason's request, invokes the spirits of night to obtain the prolongation of his old father's life. A comparison of the text plainly proves Shakespeare's indebtedness to Golding's translation of the Latin work:

"Ye Ayres and Windes: *ye Elues of Hilles, of Brooks, of Woods alone,*
Of standing Lakes, and of the Night approche ye everyone
Through helpe of whom (the crooked bankes much wondring at the thing)
I haue compelled streames to run cleane backward to their spring.
By charmes I make the calme seas rough, and make the rough seas playne,
And cover all the Skie with clouds and chase them thence againe.
By charmes I raise and lay the windes and burst the Viper's iaw,
And from the bowels of the earth both stones and trees do draw.
Whole woods and Forrests I remoouve: I make the Mountains shake,
And euen the earth it selfe to grone and fearefully to quake.
I call up dead men from their graues, and thee, O lightsome Moone,
I darken oft, though beaten brass abate thy perill soone.
Our Sorcerie dimmes the Morning faire, and darkes the Sun at Noone.
. . . . . .
Among the earth-bred brothers you a mortall warre did set
And brought asleepe the Dragon fell whose eyes were neuer shet."

The corresponding lines in *The Tempest* run:

" *Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves;*
And ye that on the sands with printless foot
Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him
When he comes back; you . . . . .
. . . . . *by whose aid—*
Weak masters though ye be—*I have bedimm'd*
The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,
And twixt the green sea and the azur'd vault
Set roaring war: to the dread-rattling thunder
Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt: *the strong-bas'd promontory*
Have I made shake; and by the spurs *pluck'd up*
The pine and cedar: graves at my command
Have wak'd their sleepers, op'd and let 'em forth
By my so potent art."

The words employed in addressing the elves are actually the same. Medea's power to raise and calm the waves becomes the elfin chase of and flight from the advancing and retreating billows. Both Medea and Prospero proclaim their power to overcloud the sky and darken the sun, to raise winds and shatter trees, tearing them up by the roots. They can make the very mountains tremble, and can compel the grave to give up its dead.

The names Prospero and Stephano may be found in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour* (1595). Prospero was also the name of a riding-master well known in the London of Shakespeare's day.

Malone has suggested that the name "Caliban" was derived from "cannibal." Although the creature displays no tendency towards cannibalism, it is possible that Shakespeare had this term for a man-eater in his mind when he invented the name; it is even probable, seeing that the passage in Montaigne from which he drew Gonzalo's Utopia is contained in a chapter headed "Les Cannibales." Furness, who has inaugurated such an admirable edition of Shakespeare, considers this surmise an improbable one. He and Th. Elze incline to the belief that the name was derived from Calibia, a town in the neighbourhood of Tunis, but the connection is scarcely more obvious. Shakespeare found the name Ariel in Isaiah xxix. 1, the name of a city in which David dwelt, and he doubtless appropriated it on account of its similarity in sound to both English and Latin words for air.

We now seem to have exhausted all the available literary sources of *The Tempest*, and we need only add that Dryden and Davenant, in their abominable adaptation of the play (published in London 1670), made free use of Calderon's already mentioned "En esta vida todo es vertad y todo es mentira," and thus provided the Miranda, who has never seen a young man, with a counterpart in Hippolyto, who has never seen the face of woman.

XXII

THE TEMPEST AS A PLAY—SHAKESPEARE AND PROSPERO—FAREWELL TO ART

ALTHOUGH, taken from the point of view of a play, *The Tempest* is lacking in dramatic interest, the entire work is so marvellously rich in poetry and so inspired by imagination, that it forms a whole little world in itself, and holds the reader captive by that power which sheer perfection possesses to enthrall.

If the ordinary being desires to obtain a salutary impression of his own insignificance and an ennobling one of the sublimity of true genius, he need only study this last of Shakespeare's masterpieces. In the majority of cases the result will be prostrate admiration.

Shakespeare gave freer rein to his imagination in this play than he had allowed himself since the days of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* and the *First Part of Henry IV.* He felt able, indeed compelled to do this; and, in spite of the restraint imposed upon him by the occasion for which it was written, he devoted his whole individuality to the task with greater force than he had done for years. The play contains far more of the nature of a confession than was usual at this period. Never, with the exception of *Hamlet* and *Timon*, had Shakespeare been so personal.

It may be said that, in a manner, *The Tempest* was a continuation of his gloomy period; once again he treated of black ingratitude and cunning and violence practised upon a good man.

Prospero, Duke of Milan, absorbed in scientific study, and finding his real dukedom in his library, imprudently intrusted the direction of his little state to his brother Antonio. The latter, betraying his trust, won over to his side all the officers of state appointed by Prospero, entered into an alliance with the Duke's enemy, Alonso, King of Naples, and reduced the hitherto

free state of Milan to a condition of vassalage. Then, with the assistance of Alonso and his brother Sebastian, Antonio attacked and dethroned Prospero. The Duke, with his little three-year-old daughter, was carried out some leagues to sea, placed in a rotten old hull, and abandoned. A Neapolitan noble, Gonzalo, compassionately supplied them with provisions, clothes, and, above all, the precious books upon which Prospero's supernatural powers depended. The boat was driven ashore upon an island whose one inhabitant, the aboriginal Caliban, was reduced to subjection by means of the control exercised over the spirit world by the banished man. Here, then, Prospero dwelt in peace and solitude, devoting himself to the culture of his mind, the enjoyment of nature, and the careful education of his daughter Miranda, who received such a training as seldom falls to the lot of a princess.

Twelve years have passed, and Miranda is just fifteen when the play begins. Prospero is aware that his star has reached its zenith and that his old enemies are in his power. The King of Naples has married his daughter, Claribel, to the King of Tunis, and the wedding has been celebrated, oddly enough, at the home of the bridegroom; but then it was probably the first time in history that a Christian King of Naples had bestowed his daughter upon a Mohammedan. Alonso, with all his train, including his brother and the usurper of Milan, is on his homeward voyage when Prospero raises the storm which drives them on his island. After being sufficiently bewildered and humiliated, they are finally forgiven, and the King's son, purified by the trials through which he has passed, is, as Prospero has all along intended that he should be, united to Miranda.

It was evidently Shakespeare's intention in *The Tempest* to give a picture of mankind as he now saw it, and we are shown something quite new in him, a typical representation of the different phases of humanity.

In Caliban we have the primitive man, the aboriginal, the animal which has just evolved into the first rough stages of the human being. In Prospero we are given the highest development of Nature, the man of the future, the superhuman man of spirit.

We have seen that Shakespeare roughly planned such a character some years back, in the faintly outlined sketch of Cerimon in *Pericles* (vol. ii. p. 294). Prospero is the fulfilment of the promise

contained in Cerimon's principal speech, a man, namely, who can compel to his uses all the beneficent powers dwelling in metals, stones, and plants. He is a creature of princely mould, who has subdued outward Nature, has brought his own turbulent inner self under perfect control, and has overpowered the bitterness caused by the wrongs he has suffered in the harmony emanating from his own richly spiritual life.

Prospero, like all Shakespeare's heroes and heroines of this last decade—Pericles, Imogen, and Hermione no less than Lear and Timon—suffers grievous wrong. He is even more sinned against than Timon, has suffered more and lost more through ingratitude. He has not squandered his substance like the misanthrope, but, absorbed in occupations of a higher nature, he has neglected his worldly interests and fallen a victim to his own careless trustfulness.

The injustice offered to Imogen and Hermione was not so detestable in its origin as that suffered by Prospero; the wrong done them sprang from misguided love, and was therefore easier to condone. The crime against the Duke was actuated by such low motives as envy and covetousness.

Tried by suffering, Prospero proves its strengthening qualities. Far from succumbing to the blow, it is not until it has fallen that he displays his true, far-reaching, and terrible power, and becomes the great irresistible magician which Shakespeare himself had so long been. His power is not understood by his daughter, who is but a child, but it is felt by his enemies. He plays with them as he pleases, compels them to repent their past treatment of him, and then pardons them with a calmness of superiority to which Timon could never have attained, but which is far from being that all-obliterating tenderness with which Imogen and Hermione forgive remorseful sinners.

There is less of charity towards the offenders in Prospero's absolution than that element of contempt which has so long and so exclusively filled Shakespeare's soul. His forgiveness, the oblivion of a scornful indifference, is not so much that of the strong man who knows his power to crush if need be, as that of the wisdom which is no longer affected by outward circumstance.

Richard Garnett aptly observes, in his critical introduction to the play in the "Irving Edition," that Prospero finds it easy to forgive because, in his secret soul, he sets very little value on the

dukedom he has lost, and is, therefore, roused to very little indignation by the treachery which deprived him of it. His daughter's happiness is the sole thing which greatly interests him now, and he carries his indifference to worldly matters so far that, without any outward compulsion, he breaks his magic wand and casts his books into the sea. Resuming his place among the ranks of ordinary men, he retains nothing but his inalienable treasure of experience and reflection. I quote the following passage from Garnett on account of its remarkable correspondence with the general conception of Shakespeare's development set forth in this book.

"That this Quixotic height of magnanimity should not surprise, that it should seem quite in keeping with the character, proves how deeply this character has been drawn from Shakespeare's own nature. Prospero is not Shakespeare, but the play is in a certain measure autobiographical. . . . It shows us more than anything else what the discipline of life had made of Shakespeare at fifty—a fruit too fully matured to be suffered to hang much longer on the tree. Conscious superiority untinged by arrogance, genial scorn for the mean and base, mercifulness into which contempt entered very largely, serenity excluding passionate affection while admitting tenderness, intellect overtopping morality but in no way blighting or perverting it—such are the mental features of him in whose development the man of the world kept pace with the poet, and who now shone as the consummate perfection of both."

In other words, it is Shakespeare's own nature which overflows into Prospero, and thus the magician represents not merely the noble-minded great man, but the genius, imaginatively delineated, not, as in *Hamlet*, psychologically analysed. Audibly and visibly does Prospero's genius manifest itself, visible and audible also the inward and outward opposition he combats.

The two figures in which this spiritual power and this resistance are embodied are the most admirable productions of an artist's powers in this or any other age. Ariel is a supernatural, Caliban a bestially natural being, and both have been endowed with a human soul. They were not seen, but created.

Prospero is the master-mind, the man of the future, as shown by his control over the forces of Nature. He passes as a magician, and Shakespeare found his prototype, as far as external acces-

sories were concerned, in a scholar of mark and man of high principles, Dr. Dee, who died in 1607. This Dr. Dee believed himself possessed of powers to conjure up spirits, good and bad, and on this account enjoyed a great reputation in his day. A man owning but a small share of the scientific knowledge of our times would inevitably have been regarded as a powerful magician at that date. In the creation of Prospero, therefore, Shakespeare unconsciously anticipated the results of time. He not merely gave him a magic wand, but created a poetical embodiment of the forces of Nature as his attendant spirit. In accordance with the method described in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* he gave life to Ariel:

> "The poet's eye, in fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven:
> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothings
> A local habitation and a name.
> Such tricks hath strong imagination,
> That if it would but apprehend some joy,
> It comprehends the bringer of that joy."

Ariel is just such a harbinger of joy; from the moment he appears we are content and assured of pleasurable impressions. In the whole record of poetry he is the one good spirit who arrests and affects us as a living being. He is a non-christian angel, a sprite, an elf, the messenger of Prospero's thought, the fulfiller of his will through the elementary spirits subject to the great magician's power. He is the emblem of Shakespeare's own genius, that "affable, familiar ghost" (as Shakespeare expresses it in his 86th sonnet) which Chapman boasted of possessing. His longing for freedom after prolonged servitude has a peculiar and touching significance as a symbol of the yearning of the poet's own genius for rest.

Ariel possesses that power of omnipresence and all those constantly varying forms which are the special gift of imagination. He skims along the foam, flies on the keen north wind, and burrows in the frozen earth. Now he is a fire spirit spreading terror as he flashes in cloven flame, encircling the mast and playing about the rigging of the vessel, or as one great bolt hurls himself to strike with all the power and speed of lightning. Now

again, he is a mermaid, seen in fitful glimpses, and chanting alluring songs. He sounds the magic music of the air, he mimics the monotonous splashing of the waves, or barks like a dog and crows like a cock. In every essence of his nature as well as name he is a spirit of the air, a mirage, a hallucination of light and sound. He is a bird, a harpy, and finds his way through the darkness of night to fetch dew from the enchanted Bermudas. Faithful and zealous servant of the good, he terrifies, bewilders, and befools the wicked. He is compounded of charm and delicacy, and is as swift and bright as lightning.

He was formerly in the service of the witch Sycorax, but, incurring her displeasure, was imprisoned by her in the rift of a cloven pine. There he was held in suffering many years, until delivered at last by Prospero's supernatural powers. He serves the magician in return for his release, but never ceases to long for his promised freedom. Although a creature of the air, he is capable of compassion, and can understand a sentiment of devotion which he does not actually feel. His subject condition is painful to him, and he looks forward with joy to the hour of liberty. Spirit of fire and air as he is, his essence exhales itself in music and mischievous pranks.

Caliban, on the other hand, is of the earth earthy, a kind of land-fish, a being formed of heavy and gross materials, who was raised by Prospero from the condition of an animal to that of a human being, without, however, being really civilised. Prospero made much of the creature at first, caressed him and gave him to drink of water mixed with the juice of berries ; taught him the art of speech and how to name the greater and the lesser light, and lodged him in his cell. But from the moment Caliban's savage instinct prompted him to attempt the violation of Miranda, Prospero treated him as a slave and made him serve as such. Strangely enough, however, Shakespeare has made him no prosaically raw being, untouched by the poetry of the enchanted island. The vulgar new-comers, Trinculo and Stephano, speak in prose, but Caliban's utterances are always rhythmic ; indeed, many of the most exquisitely melodious lines in the play fall from the lips of this poor animal. They sound like an echo from the time he lived within the magic circle and was the constant companion of Prospero and Miranda.

But since, from being their fellow, he has been degraded to

their slave, all gratitude for former benefits has disappeared from his mind; and he now employs the language they have taught him in cursing the master who has robbed him, the original inhabitant, of his birthright. His is the hatred of the savage for his civilised conquerors.

We have seen that the abhorrence Shakespeare felt for the vices of the court and fashionable life inclined him during these later years to dream of some natural life far from all civilisation (*Cymbeline*). But his instinct was too sure and his judgment too sound to allow of his ever believing, with the Utopists of his day, that the natural primitive state of man was one of innocence and nobility of soul in the golden age of prehistoric times. Caliban is a protest against this very theory, and Shakespeare distinctly ridicules all such fanaticism in the lines copied from Montaigne, and placed in Gonzalo's mouth, concerning the organisation of an ideal commonwealth; without commerce, law, or letters, without riches or poverty, without corn, oil, or wine, and without work of any kind, but a happy idleness for all.

Caliban represents the primitive, the prehistoric man; yet, such as he is, a poetically inclined philosopher of our day has discovered in him the features of the eternal plebeian. It is instructive to witness with how few reservations Renan was enabled to modernise the type, and shown how, tidied up and washed and interpreted as the dull fickle democracy, Caliban was as capable as the old aristocratic-religious despotism of sounding a conservative note, of protecting the arts and graciously patronising the sciences, &c.

Shakespeare's Caliban was the offspring of Sycorax and begotten by the Devil himself. With such a pedigree he could hardly be expected to rise to any height of angelic goodness and purity. He is, in reality, more of an elemental power than a human being; and therefore rouses neither indignation nor contempt in the mind of the audience, but genuine amusement. Invented, and drawn with masterly humour, he represents the savage natives found by the English in America, upon whom they bestowed the blessings of civilisation in the form of strong drink. There is not only wit but profound significance in the scene (Act ii. sc. 2) in which Caliban, who at first takes Trinculo and Stephano for two spirits sent by Prospero to torment him, allows himself to be persuaded that Trinculo is the Man in the Moon,

shown to him by Miranda on beautiful moonlight nights, and forthwith worships him as his god, because he alone possesses the bottle with the heavenly liquor which has been put to the creature's lips, and given him his first taste of the wonderful intoxication produced by fire-water.

Midway between these symbols of the highest culture and of Nature in its crudest form Shakespeare has placed a young girl, as noble in body and soul as her father, and yet so purely and simply a child of Nature that she unhesitatingly follows her instincts, including that of love. She is the counterpart of the masculine ideal in Prospero, being all that is admirable in woman; hence her name, Miranda. To preserve her absolutely unspotted and fresh, Shakespeare has made her almost as young as his Juliet; and to still further accentuate the impression of maidenly immaculateness, she has grown up without seeing a single youth of the other sex, a trait which was used and abused by the Spaniards later in the same century. Hence the wondering admiration of the first meeting between Ferdinand and Miranda:

> "What! is't a spirit?
> Lord, how it looks about! Believe me, sir,
> It carries a brave form. But 'tis a spirit."

When her father denies this she says:

> "I might call him
> A thing divine, for nothing natural
> I ever saw so noble."

And Ferdinand:

> "My prime request,
> Which I do last pronounce, is, O you wonder!
> If you be maid or no?"

It is Prospero, whose greatness shows no less in his power over human beings than over the forces of Nature, who has brought these two together, and who, although assuming displeasure at their mutual attraction, causes all which concerns them to follow the exact course his will has marked out.

He sees into the soul of mankind with as sure an eye as Shakespeare himself, and plays the part of Providence to his

surroundings as incontestably as did the poet to the beings of his own creation.

When Prospero shows the young people to his guests, they are playing chess, and there would seem to be a touch of symbol in the fact that they are playing, not only because they wish to do so, but because they must. There is, moreover, something almost personal in the way Prospero trains and admonishes the loving couple. Garnett is inclined to infer from the repeated exhortations to Ferdinand to restrain the impulse of his blood until the wedding-hour has struck, that the play was acted some days before the royal wedding ceremony. But if these warnings were intended for the Elector in his capacity of bridegroom, they were a piece of tasteless impertinence. No, it is far more likely that, as before suggested, they contain a melancholy confession, a purely personal reminiscence. Shakespeare cannot be accused of any excessive severity in such questions of morals. We saw in *Measure for Measure* that he considered the connection between the two lovers, for which they are to be so severely punished, was to the full as good as marriage, although entered upon without ceremonies. It was no mere formalism which spoke here, but bitter experience. Now that he was already, in thought, on his way back to Stratford, and was living in anticipation of what awaited him there, Shakespeare was reminded of how he and Anne Hathaway forestalled their ceremonial union, and he spoke of the punishment following on such actions as a curse, which he knew:

> "Barren hate,
> Sour-eyed disdain and discord shall bestrew
> The union of your bed with weeds so loathly
> That you shall hate it both" (Act iv. sc. 1).

As already observed, Shakespeare appropriated from some source or another the incident of the youthful suitor being obliged to submit to the trial of carrying and piling wood. It almost seems that his motive in including such an incident was to show that it is man's great and noble privilege to serve out of love. To Caliban all service is slavery; throughout the whole play he roars for freedom, and never so loudly as when he is drunk. For Ariel, too, all bondage, even that of a higher being, is mere torment. Man alone finds pleasure in the servitude of

love. Thus Ferdinand bears uncomplainingly, and even gladly, for Miranda's sake, the burden laid upon him (Act iii. sc. 1):

> "I am in my condition
> A prince, Miranda, I do think, a king.
> . . . . . .
> The very instant that I saw you, did
> My heart fly to your service; there resides
> To make me slave to it."

She shares this feeling:

> "I am your wife if you will marry me!
> If not, I'll die your maid; to be your fellow
> You may deny me; but I'll be your servant
> Whether you will or no."

It is a feeling of the same nature which impels Prospero to return to Milan to fulfil his duty towards the state whose government he has so long neglected.

There are certain analogies between *The Tempest* and the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. In both we are shown a fantastic world in which heavenly powers make sport of earthly fools. Caliban discovering a god in the drunken Trinculo reminds us of Titania's amorous worship of Bottom. Both are wedding-plays, and yet what a difference! The *Midsummer Night's Dream* was one of Shakespeare's earliest independent poetical works, written at the age of twenty-six, and his first great success. *The Tempest* was written as a farewell to art and the artist's life, just before the completion of his forty-ninth year, and everything in the play bespeaks the touch of autumn.

The scenery is autumnal throughout, and the time is that of the autumn equinox with its storms and shipwrecks. With noticeable care all the plants named, even those occurring merely in similes, are such flowers and fruit, &c., as appear in the fall of the year in a northern landscape. The climate is harsh and northerly in spite of the southern situation of the island and the southern names. Even the utterances of the goddesses, the blessing of Ceres, for example, show that the season is late September—thus answering to Shakespeare's time of life and frame of mind.

No means of intensifying this impression are neglected. The utter sadness of Prospero's famous words describing the trackless

disappearance of all earthly things harmonises with the time of year and with his underlying thought—"We are such stuff as dreams are made on:" a deep sleep, from which we awaken to life, and again, deep sleep hereafter. What a personal note it is in the last scene of the play where Prospero says:

> "And thence retire me to my Milan, where
> Every third thought shall be my grave."

How we feel that Stratford was the poet's Milan, just as Ariel's longing for freedom was the yearning of the poet's genius for rest. He has had enough of the burden of work, enough of the toilsome necromancy of imagination, enough of art, enough of the life of the town. A deep sense of the vanity of all things has laid its hold upon him, he believes in no future and expects no results from the work of a lifetime.

> "Our revels now are ended. These our actors
> . . . . . were all spirits and
> are melted into air, into thin air."

Like Prospero, he had sacrificed his position to his art, and, like him, he had dwelt upon an enchanted island in the ocean of life. He had been its lord and master, with dominion over spirits, with the spirit of the air as his servant, and the spirit of the earth as his slave. At his will graves had opened, and by his magic art the heroes of the past had lived again. The words with which Prospero opens the fifth act come, despite all gloomy thoughts of death and wearied hopes of rest, straight from Shakespeare's own lips:

> "Now does my project gather to a head;
> My charms crack not; my spirits obey; and time
> Goes upright with his carriage."

All will soon be accomplished and Ariel's hour of deliverance is nigh. The parting of the master from his genius is not without a touch of melancholy:

> "My dainty Ariel! *I shall miss thee*,
> But yet thou shalt have freedom."

Prospero has determined in his heart to renounce all his magical powers:

> "To the elements
> Be free, and fare thee well!"

He has taken leave of all his elves by name, and now utters words whose personal application has never been approached by any character hitherto set upon the stage by Shakespeare:

> "But this rough service
> I here abjure, and, when I have required
> Some heavenly music, which even now I do,
> . . . . . I'll break my staff,
> Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
> And deeper than did ever plummet sound
> I'll drown my book."

Solemn music is heard, and Shakespeare has bidden farewell to his art.

Collaboration in *Henry VIII.* and the production and staging of *The Tempest* were the last manifestations of his dramatic activity. In all probability he only waited for the close of the court festivities before carrying out his plan of leaving London and returning to Stratford; and Ben Jonson's foolish thrust at *those who beget tales, tempests, and such like drolleries*, would not find him in town. When we drew attention to his efforts to increase his capital, and his purchase of houses and land at Stratford, we showed that, even at that early period, he hoped eventually to quit the metropolis, to give up the theatre and literature and to spend the last years of his life in the country. Even supposing him to have delayed his departure until after the performance of *The Tempest*, an event which happened only four months later would have supplied the final inducement to leave. In the month of June 1613 a fire broke out, as we know, at the Globe Theatre during a performance of *Henry VIII.*, and the whole building was burned to the ground. Thus the scene of his activity for so many long years disappeared, as it were, in smoke, leaving no trace behind. He was probably part owner of the stage properties and costumes, which were all consumed. In any case, the flames devoured all the manuscripts of his plays then in the possession of the theatre, a priceless treasure—for him surely a painful, and for us an irreparable, loss.

XXIII

THE RIDE TO STRATFORD

THAT must have been a momentous day in Shakespeare's life on which, after giving up his house in London, he mounted his horse and rode back to Stratford-on-Avon to take up his abode there for good.

He would recall that day in 1585 when, twenty-eight years younger, with his life lying before him veiled in the mists of expectation and uncertainty, he set out from Stratford to London to try his fortunes in the great city. Then his heart beat high, and he must have felt towards his horse much as the Dauphin did in *Henry V.* (Act iii. sc. 7) when he said, "When I bestride him I soar, I am a hawk: he trots the air; the earth sings when he touches it, the basest horn of his hoof is more musical than the pipe of Hermes."

Life lay behind him now. His hopes had been fulfilled in many ways; he was famous, he had raised himself a degree in the social scale, above all he was rich, but for all that he was not happy.

The great town, in which he had spent the better part of a lifetime, had not so succeeded in attaching him to it that he would feel any pain in leaving it. There was neither man nor woman there so dear to him as to make society preferable to solitude, and the crowded life of London to the seclusion of the country and an existence passed in the midst of family and Nature.

He had toiled enough, his working days were over, and now, at last, the cloud should be lifted from his name which had so long been cast upon it by his profession. It was nine years since he had actually appeared upon the stage, since he had made over his parts to others, and now he had ceased to take any pleasure in his pen. None of those were left for whom he had cared to write plays and put them upon the stage; the new generation and present frequenters of the theatre were strangers

to him. There was no one in London who would heed his leaving it, no friends to induce him to stay, no farewell banquet to be given in his honour.

He would remember his first arrival in London, and how, according to the custom of all poor travellers, he sold his horse at Smithfield. He could, if he wished, keep many horses now, but no power could renew the joyous mood of twenty-one. Then the wind had played with the long curls hanging below his hat, now he was elderly and bald.

The journey from London to Stratford took three days. He would put up at the inns at which he was accustomed to stay on his yearly journey to and fro, and where he was always greeted as a welcome guest, and given a bed with snow-white sheets, for which travellers on foot were charged an extra penny, but which he, as rider, enjoyed gratis. The hostess at Oxford, pretty Mistress Davenant, would give him a specially cordial greeting. The two were old and good friends. Little William, born in 1606, and now seven years old, possessed a certain, perhaps accidental, resemblance of feature to the guest.

As Shakespeare rode on, Stratford, so well known and yet, as settled home, so new, would (as Hamlet says) rise "before his mind's eye." A life of daily companionship with his wife was to begin afresh after a break of twenty-eight years. She was now fifty-seven, and consequently much older, in proportion, than her husband of forty-nine than when they were lovers and newly married, the one under and the other somewhat over twenty. There could be no intellectual bond between them after so long a separation, and their married life was but an empty form.

Of their two daughters, Susanna, the elder, was now thirty, and had been married for six years to Dr. John Hall, a respected physician at Stratford. Judith, the younger daughter, was twenty-eight and unmarried.

The Halls, with their little five-year-old daughter, lived in a picturesque house in Old Stratford, at that time surrounded by woods. Mrs. Shakespeare and Judith lived at New Place, and the spirit prevailing in both establishments was not the spirit of Shakespeare.

Not only the town of Stratford, but his own home and family were desperately pious and puritanical. That power which had been most inimical to him in London, which had dishonoured his

profession, and with which he had been at war during all the years of his dramatic activity; that very power against which he had striven, sometimes by open attack, more often by cautious insinuation, had triumphed in his native town behind his back and taken complete possession of his only home.

The closing of the theatre, which did not occur in London until the Puritans had completely gained the upper hand many years later, had already been anticipated in Stratford. The performance of those plays at which Shakespeare in his youth had made acquaintance with the men, his future brother professionals, with whom he sought refuge in London, was strictly forbidden. So long ago as 1602 the town council had carried a resolution that no performance of play or interlude should be permitted in the Guildhall, that long, low building with its eight small-paned windows. It was the only place in Stratford suitable for such a purpose, and was connected with many of Shakespeare's memories. Directly above the long narrow hall, on the first floor, was the school which he had attended daily as a child. Into the hall itself he had awesomely penetrated the day the glories of a theatre were first displayed before his childish eyes. And now eleven years had passed since that wise Council had decreed that any alderman or citizen giving his consent to the representation of plays in this building should be fined ten shillings for every infringement of the prohibition. This not proving a sufficient deterrent, the fine was raised in 1612 from ten shillings to the extravagant sum of £10, equivalent to about £50 in our day. Fifty pounds for allowing a play to be performed in the only hall in the town suitable for the purpose! This was rank fanaticism!

Moreover, it was a fanaticism which had found its way into his own home. That strong tendency to Puritanism which was so marked among his descendants until the race died out, had already developed in his family. His wife was extremely religious, as is often the case with women whose youthful conduct has not been too circumspect. When she captured her boy husband of eighteen, her blood was as warm as his, but now she was vastly his superior in matters of religion. Neither could he look for any real intellectual companionship from his daughters. Susanna was pious, her husband still more so. Judith was as ignorant as a child. Thus he must pay the penalty of his long

absence from home and his utter neglect of the education of his girls.

It was to no happy harmony of thought and feeling, therefore, that the poet could look forward as he rode away from his dramatic fairyland to the simplicities of domestic life. The only attractions existing for him there were his position as a gentleman, the satisfaction of no longer being obliged to act and write for money, and the pleasure of living on and roaming about his own property. The very fact that he did go back to Stratford with the little there was to attract him there proves how slight a hold London had taken upon him, and with what a feeling of loneliness, and (now that the bitterness was past) with what indifference, he bade farewell to the metropolis, its inhabitants and its pleasures.

It was the quietude of Stratford which attracted him, its leisure, the emptiness of its dirty streets, its remoteness from the busy world. What he really longed for was Nature, the Nature with which he had lived in such intimate companionship in his early youth, which he had missed so terribly while writing *As You Like It* and its fellow-plays, and from which he had so long been separated.

Far more than human beings was it the gardens which he had bought and planted there which drew him back to his native town—the gardens and trees on which he looked from his windows at New Place.

XXIV

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

HE was home again. Home once more, where he knew every road and path, every house and field, every tree and bush. The silence of the empty streets struck him afresh as his footsteps echoed down them, and the river Avon shone bright and still between the willows bending down to the water's edge. He had shot many a deer in the neighbourhood of that stream, and it was by its banks that Jaques, in *As You Like It*, had sat as he watched the wounded stag that sighed as though its leathern coat would burst, while the big round tears coursed down its innocent nose. The fine arched bridge was erected in the time of Henry VIII. by the same Sir Hugh Clopton who had built New Place, the house which Shakespeare had bought, and been obliged to restore before his family could live in it.

Close by the river stood the avenue leading to the beautiful Gothic church of the Holy Trinity, with its slender spire and handsome windows. Within were the graves and monuments of the neighbouring gentry, and there, so much sooner than he could possibly have dreamed, was Shakespeare himself to lie.

Passing through Church Street, he would come upon the Guild Chapel, a fine square building, from whose tower rang the weekly bells calling to Sunday-morning service. He remembered those bells from of old, and now they would be constantly sounding in his ears, for New Place lay just across the road. Soon they would be tolling his own funeral knell. Directly adjoining the chapel stood the timbered building which represented both Guildhall and school. Once it had seemed large and spacious; how small and mean it looked now! It was more satisfactory to glance on to the corner where his large garden and green lawns stood, and his eye would rest affectionately upon the mulberry-tree his own hands had planted.

Ten steps from his door lay the tavern, quaint and low, and how familiar! Not the first time would it be that he had sat at that table, the largest, it was said, that had ever been cut in England from a single piece of wood. He would at least find something to drink there, and a game of draughts or dice. With a sigh he realised that this tavern was likely to prove his chief refuge from his loneliness.

Every spot was rich in memories. Five minutes' walk would bring him to Henley Street, where he had played as a child, and where stood the old house in which he was born. He would enter; there was the kitchen, which had been the living room as well in his parents' time; near the entry was the woman's store-room, and above, the sleeping-room in which he was born. How little he dreamed that this spot was to become a place of pilgrimage for the whole Anglo-Saxon race—nay, for the whole civilised world.

He would take the road to Shottery, along which he had walked times out of number in his youth—for had not he and Anne Hathaway kept their trysts there? Right and left rose the high hedges separating the fields. Trees, standing singly or in groups, were scattered about the country, and the road, lined with elms, beeches, and willows, wound its way through the undulating country lying between Stratford and Shottery. Half-an-hour's walk would bring him to Anne Hathaway's cottage, with the moss-grown roof. He would enter, and look once more upon the wooden bench in the chimney-corner on which he and she had sat in their ardent youth. How long ago it all seemed! There was the old fifteenth-century bed in which Anne's parents had slept, with her, as a child, at their feet. The mattress was nothing but a straw palliasse, but the bedstead was beautifully carved with figures in the old style. When, a year or two later, he bequeathed to his wife "the second best bed," did he remember that this bed was already hers, I wonder?

Another day he would make his way as far as Warwick and its castle. The town was not unlike that of Stratford; it had the same timbered houses, but here the two great towers of the castle rose and predominated over the beautiful scenery. How vividly the past would rise up before him as he stood on the bridge and gazed up at the castle. He would remember his own youthful dreams concerning it, and the forms he had conjured up

from their graves to people it afresh. There was the Earl of Warwick, who enumerated all the proofs of Gloucester's violent death in *Henry VI.*, and that other Earl in the *Second Part of Henry IV.* (Act iii. sc. 1) into whose mouth he had put words whose truth he was now proving:

> "There is a history in all men's lives
> Figuring the nature of the times deceased."

Charlcote House he would see too. He had stood as a culprit before its master once, and had suffered the bitterest humiliation of his life, one so deep that it had driven him away from home, and had thus been the means of leading him to success and prosperity in London.

How strange it was to be here again where every one knew and greeted him. In London he had been swallowed up in the crowd. How familiar, too, the homely provincial version of his name, with the abbreviated first syllable. In town that first syllable was always long, a pronunciation which left no doubt as to the etymology of the name.[1] It was on account of these differing pronunciations that he had, while in London, changed the spelling of his name. He had always written it *Shakspere*, but in town it had from the first (the dedication of *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*) been printed *Shakespeare:* a spelling always followed by the various publishers of the quarto editions of his dramas, only one adopting the orthography *Shakspeare.*[2]

Every one knew him, and he must exchange a word with all—with the ploughman in the field, the farmer's wife in her poultry-yard, the mason on the scaffolding, the fish-dealer at his stall, the cobbler in his workshop, and the butcher in the slaughter-house. How well he could talk to each, for no human occupation, how-

[1] In 1875 Charles Mackay made an attempt, in the *Athenæum*, to prove a Celtic origin for the name, deriving it from *seac* = dry, and *speir* = shanks, thus dry or long shanks. If we take into consideration the numerous other names and nicknames of the day which began with Shake—Shake-buckler, Shake-launce, Shake-shaft, &c., this explanation does not seem very probable. Another argument in favour of its Anglo-Saxon origin and simple meaning, *Spearshaker*, is the contemporaneous existence of the Italian surname Crollalanza.

[2] It may be mentioned that there were no less than fifty-five different ways of writing the name at that time. It is well known that such spellings were quite arbitrary. In Shakespeare's wedding contract, for example, we have the version *Shagspere.*

ever humble, was unfamiliar to him. He had a thorough acquaintance from of old with the butcher's trade. It had formed a part of his father's business, and his early tragedies contain many a proof of his familiarity with it. The Second and Third Parts of *Henry VI.* are full of similes drawn from it.[1]

There was hardly any trade, calling, or position in life which he did not understand as if he had been born to it. Doubtless the simple folk of his native town respected him as much for his sound judgment and universal knowledge as for his wealth and property. It would be too much to expect that they should recognise anything more and greater in him.

Many years ago, at the outset of his career as a dramatist, he had made a defeated king praise a country life for its simplicity and freedom from care (*Third Part of Henry VI.*, ii. 5):

> "O God! methinks it were a happy life
> To be no better than a homely swain;
> To sit upon a hill, as I do now,
> To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,
> Thereby to see the minutes how they run,
> How many make the hour full complete;
> How many hours bring about the day;

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[1] "And as the butcher takes away the calf,
And binds the wretch and beats it when it strays,
Bearing it to the bloody slaughter-house" (II. iii. 1).

"Who finds the heifer dead and bleeding fresh,
And sees fast by a butcher with an axe,
But will suspect 'twas he that made the slaughter" (II. iii. 2).

"*Holland.* And Dick the butcher.

"*Bevis.* Then is sin struck down like an ox and iniquity's throat cut like a calf" (II. iv. 2).

"*Cade.* They fell before thee like sheep and oxen, and thou behavedst thyself as if thou hadst been in thine own slaughter-house" (II. iv. 3).

"So first the harmless sheep doth yield his fleece,
And next his throat unto the butcher's knife" (III. v. 6).

In *As You Like It* (ii. 2) Rosalind says, using a simile drawn from the same trade: "This way will I take upon me to wash your liver clean as a sound sheep's heart, that there shall be not one spot of love in it."

See Alfred C. Calmon, who in *Fact and Fiction about Shakespeare* has been very successful in pointing out the numerous reminiscences of Stratford to be found in Shakespeare's plays.

How many days will finish up the year;
How many years a mortal man may live.
When this is known, then to divide the times:
So many hours must I tend my flock;
So many hours must I take my rest;
So many hours must I contemplate;
So many hours must I sport myself;
So many days my ewes have been with young;
So many weeks ere the poor fools will yean;
So many years ere I shall shear the fleece:
So minutes, hours, days, months and years,
Passed over to the end they were created,
Would bring white hairs and a quiet grave."

In just such a regular monotony were Shakespeare's own days now to pass.

XXV

THE LAST YEARS OF SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE

DID Shakespeare find that peace and contentment at Stratford which he sought? From one thing and another we are almost forced to conclude he did not. His own family seem to have looked upon him in the light of a returned artist-bohemian, of a man whose past career and present religious principles were anything but a credit to them. Elze and others believe, indeed, that, like Byron's descendants at a later date, Shakespeare's family considered him a stain upon their reputation. This surmise may be correct, but there is no very great foundation for it.

It has long been inferred, from the fact that he made her his heiress, that Susanna was Shakespeare's favourite daughter. She was probably the individual to whom he felt most drawn in Stratford; but we must not conclude too much from a testamentary disposition. It was plainly the poet's intention to entail his property, and his original desire was that his little son Hamnet, as bearer and continuer of the name, should succeed to everything. Upon the death of the son, the elder daughter would naturally take his place.

It is not conceivable that Susanna could have any real understanding of, or sympathy with, her father. Her very epitaph places her in direct contrast with him in matters of religion, distinctly maintaining that though she was gifted above her sex, which she owed partly to her father, she was also wise with regard to her soul's salvation, and that was entirely due to Him whose happiness she was now sharing. Shakespeare had none of the credit for that.[1] Her natural inclination to bigoted piety

[1] "Witty above her sexe, but that's not all,
Wise to salvation was good Mistress Hall,
Something of Shakespeare was in that, but this
Wholly of him with whom she's now in blisse."

was confirmed and augmented by the influence of her husband, whose sectarian zeal and narrow-minded hatred of Catholicism are plainly shown in such of his journals and books as have been preserved. We can fancy how Shakespeare's depth and delicacy of feeling must have suffered under all this. It is even possible that Susanna and her husband may have burned, on the score of what they considered his irreligious principles, any papers that Shakespeare left behind, as Byron's family destroyed his memoirs. This would explain their total disappearance, which, after all, is no more strange than the utter absence of any manuscripts belonging to Beaumont or Fletcher, or any other dramatic writer of the period.

The younger daughter, Judith, could not even write her own name, and signed her mark with a quaint little flourish when she was married. It is clearly impossible, therefore, that she could have taken any interest in her father's manuscripts. In the seventeenth century it was no very liberal education that a poet's daughter received; even Milton's eldest daughter, at a much later period, was unable to write. Susanna could just inscribe her own name, but that seems to have been the limit of her literary accomplishments. Her utter indifference to all such matters would sufficiently account for the destruction of her father's papers, and this surmise is confirmed by a remarkable statement made in his preface by Dr. John Cooke, the editor of her husband's papers. Whilst serving as army surgeon during the Civil War, he was stationed at Stratford to defend the bridge over the Avon. One of his men, lately an assistant of Dr. Hall's, told him that the books and manuscripts left by the doctor were still in existence, and offered to accompany him to the widow's house in search of them. Cooke examined the books, and Mrs. Hall informed him that she had others which had belonged to her husband's partner, and had cost a considerable sum. He replied that if the books pleased him he would be willing to pay the original price. She then produced them, and they proved to be the very book from which we are quoting, and some others' all ready for printing. Cooke, who knew Dr. Hall's handwriting, told her that at least one of these books was her husband's, and showed her the writing. She denied it, and finding that his persistence was giving offence, he paid the sum she named and carried off the books.

This extract proves that Susanna neither knew her husband's handwriting nor recognised his own books. So entirely lacking was she in any interest in intellectual matters, that she, a rich woman, set no greater value on her husband's works than to sell them for a trifle on the first opportunity that offered.

We can draw a tolerably reliable inference from this anecdote of the interest she was likely to take in any written or printed papers left by her father. In all probability she did not even take the trouble to burn them, but either threw them away or sold them as waste paper.

If we reflect that Susanna, born in better circumstances and better educated than her mother, must have been decidedly her superior, we can see how little Shakespeare's wife, now well stricken in years, could have understood or appreciated her husband. She undoubtedly preferred sermons to plays, and both her heart and house were always open to itinerant Puritan preachers. Of this we possess reliable information.

Shakespeare returned to London during the winter of 1614. Letters have been preserved from his cousin Thomas Greene, the town-clerk, proving that he was in the capital on the 16th of November and the 23rd of December. This visit of his is interesting in two ways, for we know that Shakespeare, capable man of business as he was, was defending the rights of his fellow-citizens against the country gentry; and we also know the use his family made of his absence.

The town records of Stratford show that Shakespeare's family was entertaining a travelling Puritan preacher just at this time, for, according to custom, the town presented this man with a quart of sack and a quart of claret, and we read in the municipal accounts: "*Item, for one quart of sack and one quart of clarett wine geven to a preacher at the New Place, xxd.*"

It is a significant fact that his family should be entertaining a member of the sect Shakespeare held to be peculiarly inimical to himself whilst he, the master of the house, was absent on business.

Probably his family never saw one of his plays performed, nor even read such of them as were printed in the pirated editions.

Anne Hathaway's cottage, which stands unchanged, though the roof is gradually falling in, was visited by the present writer in 1895. An old woman lived in it, the last of the Hathaways. She

was sitting on a chair opposite the *courtship bench*, on which, according to tradition, the lovers used to sit. In the family Bible, lying open before her, she pointed with pride to a long list of names inscribed by the Hathaways during hundreds of years, and forming a kind of genealogical tree. The room was filled with all manner of pictures of William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway, with relics of the poet, and of famous actors and critics of his plays. The old woman, who lived among and by these comparatively valueless treasures, explained the meaning and story of each thing, but to the cautiously ventured inquiry whether she had ever read anything by this same Shakespeare who surrounded her on every side, and on whose memory she was actually living, she returned the somewhat astonished reply, "Read anything of him! No, I read my Bible." If this female Hathaway has never read anything of Shakespeare, was Anne, who must have been far behind this last scion of her race in general and certainly Shakespearian culture, likely ever to have done so?

Seeing that his own family had no great opinion of him, we can hardly be surprised that, in spite of his wealth and his oft-mentioned kindliness of disposition, he was hardly appreciated by the upper ten of Stratford's 1500 citizens. Although he was one of its richest inhabitants, he was never appointed to one of the public offices of the town during the years of his residence there.

There were few with whom he could associate in the little town. The most frequently alluded to of his Stratford acquaintances was a certain John Combe (steward of Ambrose, Earl of Warwick), a man of low repute as tax-collector and worse as money-lender and usurer. That he figured as a philanthropist in his will does not prove very much, but he must have been better than his reputation, or he would surely never have been one of Shakespeare's companions. Tradition tells that the poet and Combe not only spent much time together in their own houses, but were also in the habit of passing their evenings in the tavern (now called the Falcon) which lay just across the road. Here, then, the mighty genius, stranded in a little country town, sat at the same great table which stands there to-day, tossing dice and emptying his glass in company with a country bumpkin of doubtful reputation.

Tradition further adds that it was one of Shakespeare's few

amusements to compose ironical epitaphs for his acquaintances, and he is said to have written an exceedingly contemptuous one upon John Combe in his character of usurer and extortioner. This epitaph, however, which has survived to us in various forms, is proved to have been printed, with its many variations, as early as 1608. It was probably only assigned to Shakespeare in the same manner that all the Danish witticisms of the following century were attributed to Wessel. John Combe died in 1614, leaving Shakespeare a legacy of five pounds. If he was the best of Shakespeare's Stratford associates, we can figure to ourselves the rest.

His chief companionship must have been that of Nature.

Wiser and more profound than any other in Voltaire's *Candide* is its closing utterance, "*Il faut cultiver notre jardin.*" Candide and his friends, at the end of the story, come across a Turk who, absolutely indifferent to all that is occurring in Constantinople, is entirely absorbed in the cultivation of his garden. The only communication he holds with the capital is to send thither for sale the fruit that he grows. This Turk's philosophy of life makes a great impression upon Voltaire's hero, who has known and experienced the dangers and difficulties of nearly every human lot, and his constant refrain throughout the last pages of the book is, "*Je sais qu'il faut cultiver notre jardin.*" "You are right," answers another character; "let us work and give up brooding; only work makes life bearable." When Pangloss undertakes, for the last time, to prove how wonderfully everything is linked together in this best of all possible worlds, Candide adds the final apostrophe, "Well said! but we must cultivate our gardens."

This was the thought which was now singing its meagre, sad little melody in Shakespeare's soul.

His two gardens stretched from New Place down to the Avon; the larger had one fault—it only communicated by a narrow lane with the bit of ground that lay directly round the house, two small properties on the Chapel Lane side intervening between house and garden. The smaller garden was probably given up to flowers, the larger to the cultivation of fruit. Warwickshire is especially noted for its apples.

Thus Shakespeare could now improve the quality of his own fruit by that process of grafting which Polixenes had so lately taught Perdita in the *Winter's Tale*. He could now, as did the

gardener long ago in *Richard II.*, bid his assistants bind up the dangling apricots and prop the bending branches.

He had planted the famous mulberry-tree with his own hand, and it stood until the Rev. Francis Gastrell, who owned New Place in 1756, cut it down in a fit of exasperation with the crowds who requested admission to see it. Any one who has visited Stratford knows of the endless pieces of furniture and little boxes which were made from its wood. Garrick, who revived Shakespeare upon the stage, sat under it in 1744; and when, in 1769, he was presented with the freedom of the city, the casket in which the charter was enclosed was made from a portion of the tree. In the same year, when, on the occasion of Shakespeare's Jubilee, he sang his song, *Shakespeare's Mulberry-Tree*, he held in his hand a goblet made from its wood.

A serious attempt was made in Shakespeare's time to introduce the breeding of silkworms at Stratford, and the planting of the mulberry-tree may have had some connection with this experiment.

Not even the ruins of New Place are in existence to-day, but only the site where the house once stood, and the old well in the yard, which is so overgrown with ivy that the windlass looks like a handle of greenery. The foundation-stones of the boundary wall are covered with earth and grass, and form a sort of embankment towards the road. The gardens, however, are much as they were in Shakespeare's day; the larger is spacious and beautiful. Wandering there of an autumn afternoon, when the leaves are beginning to turn faintly golden, a strange feeling comes over one —a feeling belonging to the place, from which it is very difficult to tear oneself away.

One seems to see him walking with grave stateliness there, clad in scarlet, with the broad white collar falling over the sleeveless black tunic. We see the hand which has written so many ill-understood and insufficiently appreciated masterpieces binding up branches or lopping off stray tendrils, while the sunlight sparkles on the plain gold signet ring with its initials, W.S., which is still in our possession.

The numerous portraits and the famous death-masque discovered in Germany are all forgeries. The only genuine likenesses are the bad engraving by Droeshout prefixed to the first Folio and the poorly executed coloured bust by the Dutchman

Gerhard Johnson on the monument in the Church of the Holy Trinity, which was probably done from a death-masque. It may be added that a painting was discovered at Stratford eight years ago, which purports to be the original of Droeshout's engraving, and the genuineness of which is still a matter of dispute.[1]

It holds us captive, this head with the healthy, full, red lips, the slight brownish moustache, the fine, high, poet's brow, with the reddish hair growing naturally and becomingly at the sides. The expression is speaking; Shakespeare must surely have looked like this. Even if the painting should prove a forgery, an imitation of Droeshout's work instead of its original, it will still retain an artistic and psychological value possessed by none of the other portraits. As he looks out at us from the canvas, we seem to see him as he was in those last years at Stratford, chatting with the townsfolk and "cultivating his garden."[2]

[1] In the Halliwell-Phillips collection of Shakespearian rarities, stored at the Safe Deposit, Chancery Lane, there was a copy of the print which, according to the catalogue of the collection, is in its original proof condition, before it was altered by "an inferior hand." As traces of what is called the "inferior hand" are to be found in the painting, it would seem that the latter was copied from the print. (See John Corbin: *Two Undescribed Portraits of Shakespeare. Harper's New Monthly Magazine.*)

[2] R. E. Hunter: *Shakespeare and Stratford.* 1864. Halliwell-Phillips: *Brief Guide to the Gardens.* 1863. G. L. Lee: *Shakespeare's Home and Rural Life.* 1874. W. H. H.: *Stratford-upon-Avon. Historic Stratford.* 1893. *The Home and Haunts of Shakespeare*, with an Introduction by H. H. Furness. 1892. Karl Elze: *Shakespeare*, chap. viii.

XXVI

SHAKESPEARE'S DEATH

ON the 9th of July 1614 a terrible calamity fell upon the little town in which Shakespeare dwelt, and a great fire destroyed no less than fifty-four houses, besides various barns and stables. In spite of a prohibitive law, the houses of most of the poorer citizens were thatched with straw, which proved, of course, highly inflammable. Doubtless Shakespeare, whose house was spared, contributed generously towards the alleviation of the general distress.

In March 1612, Shakespeare, jointly with Will Johnson, a wine merchant, John Jackson, and his friend and editor John Heminge, bought a house at Blackfriars in London. The deed of purchase which is still in existence in the British Museum, bears Shakespeare's authentic signature written above the first of the appended seals. His name above and in the body of the document has a different spelling. This property must have necessitated a certain amount of attention, and probably occasioned more than one journey up to town. The already mentioned sojourn there at the close of the year 1614 was not one of these, however. Shakespeare's object then was the fulfilment of a commission intrusted to him by his fellow-townsfolk.

For more than a century past, the great families had been enclosing all the land they could seize, and their parks and preserves began to usurp the old common lands and hunting-grounds, their object being to crush the mediæval custom of the whole community's joint interest in agriculture and cattle-rearing. A steady withdrawal of land from agricultural purposes went on, and the peasant classes were growing gradually poorer as the large landowners arbitrarily raised the prices of meat and wool. Under these circumstances the country people naturally did their best to prevent the enclosure of land.

In 1614 Shakespeare's native town was agitated by a proposal to enclose and parcel out the common land of Old Stratford and Welcombe. That Shakespeare was averse to this plan and determined to oppose it we learn from an utterance of his preserved in the memoranda of his cousin, Thomas Greene, which have been published by Halliwell-Phillips. According to these, Shakespeare said to his cousin that *he was not able to bear the enclosing of Welcombe.* We also learn that he concluded an agreement on the 28th of October, on behalf of his cousin and himself, with a certain William Replingham of Great Harborough, an ardent supporter of the enclosure project. Replingham thereby pledged himself to indemnify the persons concerned for any loss or injury entailed upon them by the enclosure. Shakespeare was also induced to plead the cause of his fellow-townsmen in London, the Stratford town council sending Thomas Greene thither to beg him to use all his influence for the benefit of the town, which had already suffered grievous loss through the fire. That Greene fulfilled his commission is proved by his letter to the council of the 17th of November 1614, in which he says he received reassuring intelligence from Shakespeare, and that both the poet and his son-in-law, Dr. Hall, believe that the dreaded plan will never be carried into execution.[1]

They were right. In 1618, in answer to a petition from the corporation, Government decreed that no enclosure was to be made, and gave orders that any fences already erected for that purpose were to be pulled down.

The year 1615 seems to have passed quietly enough in that country solitude and peace which Shakespeare had so long desired.

He must have been taken seriously ill in January 1616, for above the actual date of his will, *March 25th*, stands that of *January*, as though he had begun to draw it up, and then, feeling better, had postponed his intention of making a will.

The last event of any importance in Shakespeare's life took

[1] The passage runs: "My cosen Shakespeare comyng yesterday to town, I went to see him, how he did. He told me that they assured him they ment to inclose no further than to Gospell Bush, and so upp straight (leavyng out part of the dyngles to the ffield) to the gate in Clopton hedg, and take in Salisburyes peece; and that they mean in Aprill to survey the land, and then to give satisfaccion, and not before; and he and Mr. Hall say they think ther will be nothyng done at all."

Also C. M. Ingleby: *Shakespeare and the Welcombe Enclosures*, 1883.

place on the 10th of February 1616; on that day his daughter Judith was married. She was no longer quite young, being thirty-one, and it was no very brilliant match she made. The bridegroom, Thomas Quiney, was a tavern-keeper and vintner in Stratford, and a son of the Richard Quiney who applied eighteen years before to his "loving countryman," William Shakespeare, for a loan of £30. Thomas Quiney was four years younger than his bride, therefore the maxim of *Twelfth Night*, "Let still the woman take an elder than herself," was as little heeded in his daughter's case as it had been in Shakespeare's own. A vintner in a town the size of Stratford is not likely to have been either a very wealthy man or one of such education that Shakespeare would take any pleasure in his society.

The last wedding festivity in which Shakespeare had taken part was the ideally royal marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda. What a contrast was this of Judith and her vintner! It was prose after poetry.

Ben Jonson and Michael Drayton are supposed to have come down for the wedding, but of this we have no certain information. The supposition rests entirely on the following brief statement, written at least fifty years afterwards by the rector of Stratford, John Ward. "Shakespeare, Drayton, and Ben Jhonson had a merry meeting, and, it seems, drank too hard, for Shakespeare died of a feavour there contracted." He does not say that this merry meeting was held at the time of the wedding, but the probabilities are that it was. Drayton was a Warwickshire man, and possessed intimate friends in the neighbourhood of Stratford. Ben Jonson may have been invited in return for his having asked Shakespeare to stand as godfather to one of his children. There are good grounds for the surmise that in any case the wine was supplied by the son-in-law, and that the silver-gilt bowl bequeathed to Judith was used upon this occasion.

It was childish of the cleric to connect this little drinking party with Shakespeare's illness. The tradition of Shakespeare's liking for a good glass was rife in Stratford as late as the eighteenth century. Numerous pictures of the crab-apple tree preserve the legend that Shakespeare started off for Bidford one youthful day for the sake of the lively topers he had heard dwelt there, and the tale runs that he drank so hard he had to lie down under the *crab-tree* on his way home, and sleep for several hours.

The story repeated by Ward probably originated in these reports. All we know for certain is that some days after the wedding Shakespeare was taken ill.

Several circumstances tend to prove that the poet was attacked by typhus fever. Stratford, with its low, damp situation and its filthy roads, was a regular typhus trap in those days. Halliwell-Phillips has published a list of enactments and penalties promulgated by the magistrates with a view to the clearing of the streets. They extend into the latter half of the eighteenth century, and that there are none for the years in question is accounted for by the fact that the documents for 1605–1646 are missing. Even so late as the Shakespeare Jubilee in 1769, Garrick, who was fêted by the town on this occasion, described it as "the most dirty, unseemly, ill-pav'd, wretched-looking town in all Britain." Chapel Lane, towards which Shakespeare's house fronted, was one of the unhealthiest streets in the town. It hardly possessed a house, being but a medley of sheds and stables with an open drain running down the middle of the street. It was small wonder that the place was constantly visited by pestilential epidemics, and little was known in those days of any laws of hygiene, and as little of any treatment for typhus. Shakespeare's son-in-law, who was probably his doctor, knew of no remedy for it, as his journals prove.

Shakespeare drew up his will on the 25th of March. As we have already said, it is still in existence, and is reproduced in facsimile in the twenty-fourth volume of the German Shakespeare Year-book.

The fact that it was dictated, and the extreme shakiness of the signature at the foot of the three lengthily detailed folio pages, prove that Shakespeare was very ill when his will was made.

His daughter Susanna is the principal heiress. Judith receives £150 ready money and £150 more after the lapse of three years, under certain conditions. These are the principal bequests. Joan Hart, his sister, is remembered in various ways. She is to receive five pounds in ready money and all his clothes. Her three sons are separately mentioned, although Shakespeare cannot remember the baptismal name of the second, and are to have five pounds each. To his granddaughter, Elizabeth Hall, he leaves his silver plate. Ten pounds is to go to the poor of Stratford, and his sword to Thomas Combe. Various good burghers

of the town, including Hamlet Sadler, after whom Shakespeare's son was named, are left twenty-six shillings and eightpence each, wherewith to buy a ring in memory of the deceased. A line inserted later bequeaths a similar sum for a similar purpose to the three actors with whom Shakespeare was most intimately associated in his late company, and whom he calls "my comrades"—John Heminge, Richard Burbage, and Henry Condell. As is well known, it is to the first and last of these three that we owe the first Folio edition, containing nineteen of Shakespeare's plays which would otherwise have been lost to us.

A peculiar psychological interest attaches to the following features of the will.

In the first place, the much discussed and remarkable fact that in making his last will Shakespeare apparently entirely forgot his wife. Not until it was completed and read aloud to him did he remember that she, who would receive, of course, the legal widow's share, should at least be named; and then, between the last lines, he has inserted: "*Item, I gyve unto my wief my second best bed with the furniture.*" The poverty of the gift is the more obvious when we recall how Shakespeare's father-in-law remembered his wife in his will.

It is also significant, more especially as it was contrary to the custom of the times, that not a single member of Mrs. Shakespeare's family was mentioned in the will. The name Hathaway does not occur, although it is frequently mentioned in the wills of Shakespeare's descendants; in that of Thomas Nash, for instance, and of Susanna's daughter Elizabeth, who became Lady Barnard by her second marriage. The inference is plain, that Shakespeare was on very unfriendly terms with his wife's family.

The next peculiarity is that Shakespeare never refers to his position as a dramatic writer, nor makes any allusion to books, manuscripts, or papers of any kind, as forming part of his property. This absence of all concern for his poetical reputation is in complete accord with the sovereign contempt for posthumous fame which we have already observed in him.

Finally, it is not without significance that there was neither poet nor author mentioned among those to whom Shakespeare left money for the purchase of that ordinary token of friendship, a ring to be worn as a memento. It would seem as though he felt himself under no obligation to any of his fellow-authors, and

had nothing to thank them for. This neglect is quite in harmony with the contempt he always displayed for his brother craftsmen when he had occasion to represent them upon the stage. He may have been willing enough to drink in company with Ben Jonson, the honest and envious friend of so many years' standing, but he had no more depth of affection for him than for any other of the dramatists and lyric poets among whom his lot had been cast. As Byron says of Childe Harold—he was one among them, not of them.

He lingered on for four weeks, and then he died.

He had probably completed his fifty-second year the day before, thus dying at the same age as Molière and Napoleon. He had lived long enough to finish his work, and the mighty turbulent river of his life came to an end among the sands, in the daily drop, drop, drop.[1]

A monument was erected by his family in Stratford church before the year 1623. Below the bust is an inscription, probably of Dr. Hall's composition. The first two lines liken him, in badly constructed Latin, to a Nestor for judgment, a Socrates for genius, and a Virgil for art.[2]

We could imagine a more appropriate epitaph.

[1] It is not altogether correct to say that Shakespeare died on the same day as Cervantes. True, they both died on the 23rd of April 1616, but the Gregorian calendar was then in use in Spain, while England was still reckoning by the Julian; there is an actual difference of ten days therefore.

[2] "Judicio Pylium, genio Socratem arte Maronem,
Terra tegit, populus moeret, Olympus habet."

XXVII

CONCLUSION

EVEN a long human life is so brief and fugitive that it seems little short of a miracle that it can leave traces behind which endure through centuries. The millions die and sink into oblivion and their deeds die with them. A few thousands so far conquer death as to leave their names to be a burden to the memories of school-children, but convey little else to posterity. But some few master-minds remain, and among them Shakespeare ranks with Leonardo and Michael Angelo. He was hardly laid in his grave than he rose from it again. Of all the great names of this earth, none is more certain of immortality than that of Shakespeare.

An English poet of this century has written:

> "Revolving years have flitted on,
> Corroding Time has done its worst,
> Pilgrim and worshipper have gone
> From Avon's shrine to shrines of dust;
> But Shakespeare lives unrivall'd still
> And unapproached by mortal mind,
> The giant of Parnassus' hill,
> The pride, the monarch of mankind."

The monarch of mankind! they are proud words those, but they do not altogether over-estimate the truth. He is by no means the only king in the intellectual world, but his power is unlimited by time or space. From the moment his life's history ceases his far greater history begins. We find its first records in Great Britain, and consequently in North America; then it spread among the German-speaking peoples and the whole Teutonic race, on through the Scandinavian countries to the Finns and the Sclavonic races. We find his influence in

France, Spain, and Italy; and now, in the nineteenth century, it may be traced over the whole civilised world.

His writings are translated into every tongue and all the languages of the earth do him honour.

Not only have his works influenced the minds of readers in every country, but they have moulded the spiritual lives of thinkers, writers and poets; no mortal man, from the time of the Renaissance to our own day, has caused such upheavals and revivals in the literatures of different nations. Intellectual revolutions have emanated from his outspoken boldness and his eternal youth, and have been quelled again by his sanity, his moderation, and his eternal wisdom.

It would be far easier to enumerate the great men who have known him and owed him nothing than to reckon up the names of those who are far more indebted to him than they can say. All the real intellectual life of England since his day has been stamped by his genius, all her creative spirits have imbibed their life's nourishment from his works. Modern German intellectual life is based, through Lessing, upon him. Goethe and Schiller are unimaginable without him. His influence is felt in France through Voltaire, Victor Hugo, and Alfred de Vigny. Ludovic Vitet and Alfred de Musset were from the very first inspired by him. Not only the drama in Russia and Poland felt his influence, but the inmost spiritual life of the Sclavonic story-tellers and brooders is fashioned after the pattern of his imperishable creations. From the moment of the regeneration of poetry in the North he was reverenced by Ewald, Oehlenschläger, Bredahl, and Hauch, and he is not without his influence upon Björnson and Ibsen.

This book was not written with the intention of describing Shakespeare's triumphant progress through the world, nor of telling the tale of his world-wide dominion. Its purpose was to declare and prove that Shakespeare is not thirty-six plays and a few poems jumbled together and read *pêle-mêle*, but a man who felt and thought, rejoiced and suffered, brooded, dreamed, and created.

Far too long has it been the custom to say, "We know nothing about Shakespeare;" or, "An octavo page would contain all our knowledge of him." Even Swinburne has written of the intangibility of his personality in his works. Such assertions have been

carried so far that a wretched group of *dilettanti* has been bold enough, in Europe and America, to deny William Shakespeare the right to his own life-work, to give to another the honour due to his genius, and to bespatter him and his invulnerable name with an insane abuse which has re-echoed through every land.

It is to refute this idea of Shakespeare's impersonality, and to indignantly repel an ignorant and arrogant attack upon one of the greatest benefactors of the human race, that the present attempt has been made.

It is the author's opinion that, given the possession of forty-five important works by any man, it is entirely our own fault if we know nothing whatever about him. The poet has incorporated his whole individuality in these writings, and there, if we can read aright, we shall find him.

The William Shakespeare who was born at Stratford-on-Avon in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, who lived and wrote in London in her reign and that of James, who ascended into heaven in his comedies and descended into hell in his tragedies, and died at the age of fifty-two in his native town, rises a wonderful personality in grand and distinct outlines, with all the vivid colouring of life from the pages of his books, before the eyes of all who read them with an open, receptive mind, with sanity of judgment and simple susceptibility to the power of genius.

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